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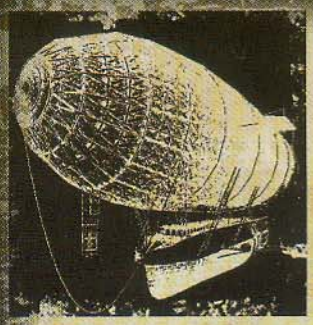

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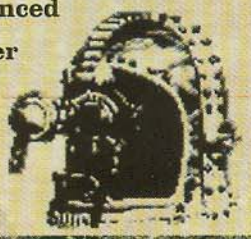

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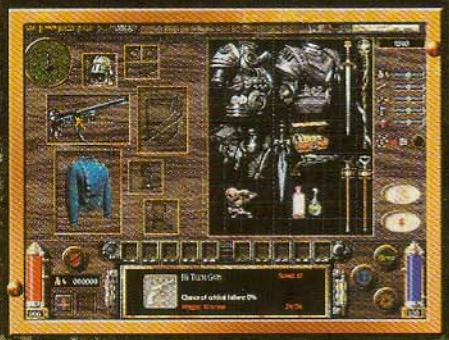

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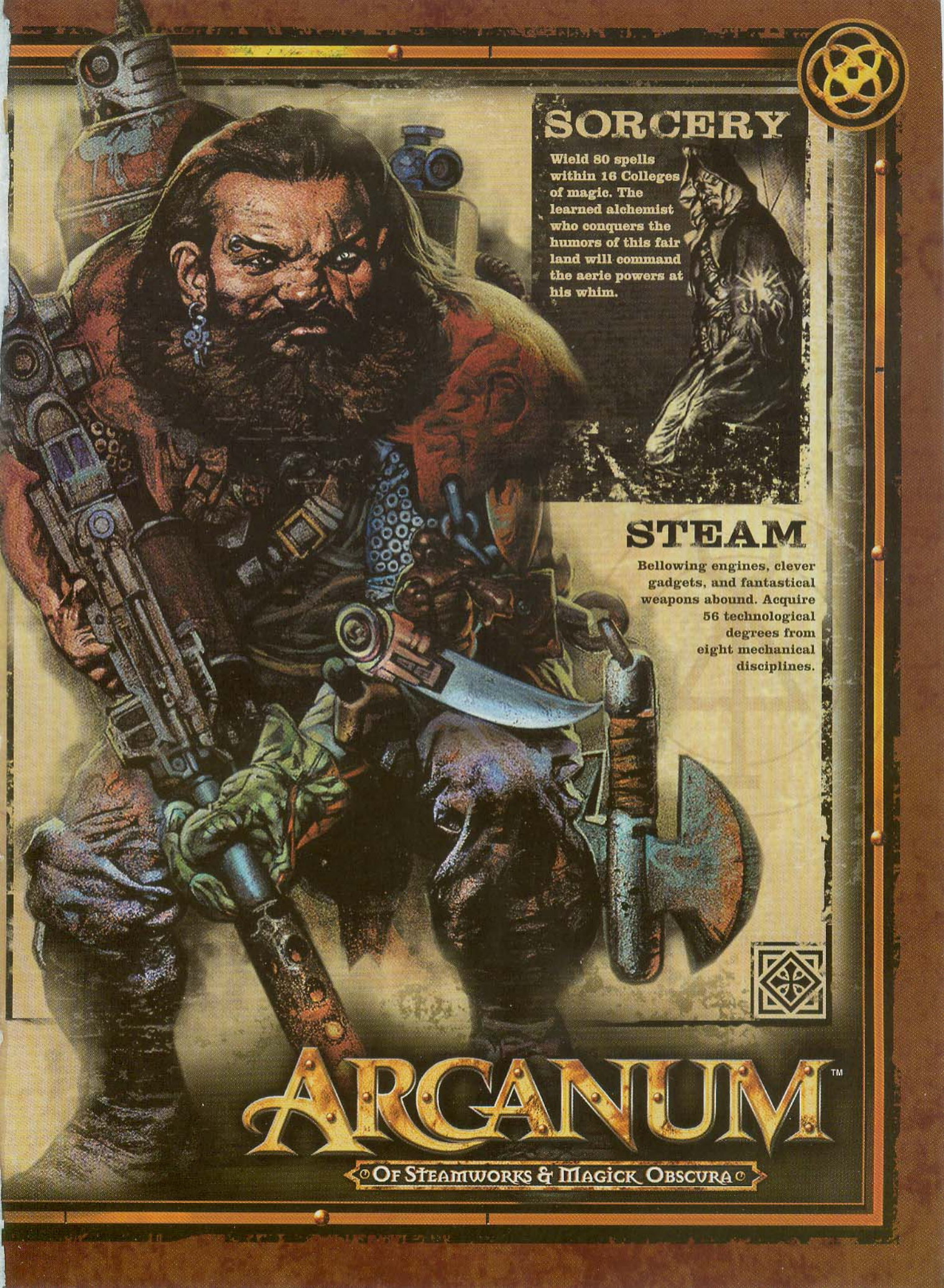
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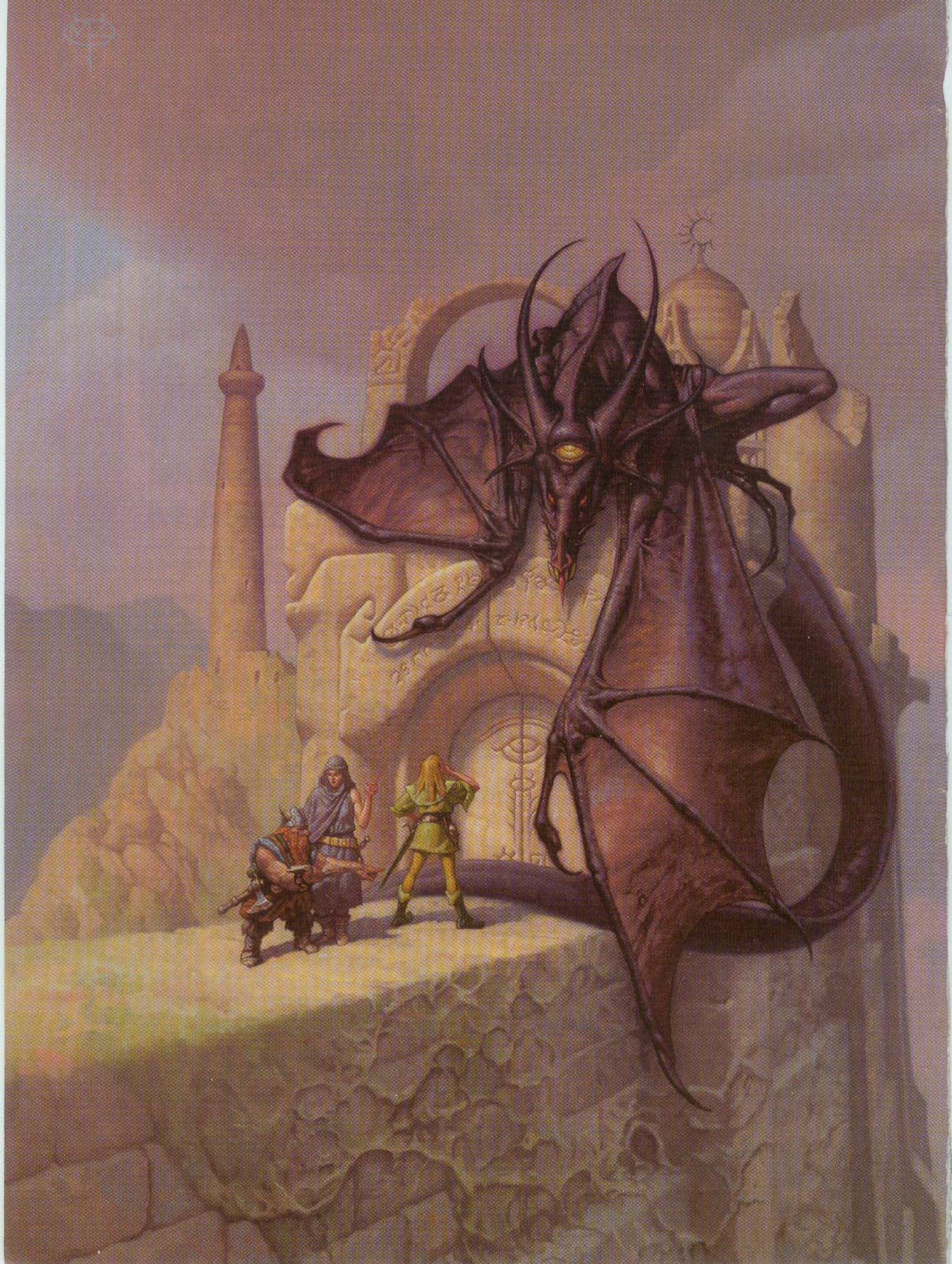

Dragon®

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On the Cover

If you've been paying attention, you'll recognize the inimitable style of Mark Zug on this month's cover. Mark's first cover for us was the 1999 Annual, and his next will be on *Dungeon® Adventures* #80. For our Puzzles & Riddles theme, Mark "drew" upon the runes of the Ancient Eldridge Lost Language to create "Overpowering Light." Gamers familiar with the runes of Greyhawk will recognize the other runes, but you'll have to figure out that message on your own.

The Wyrm's Turn™

Dead and Deader

Sevet was the first to visit the undiscovered country. When the chimera Aurtryd/Blegra/Gelexur blew us a chlorine kiss, Jeff's mighty elf barbarian failed his Fortitude saving throw and was quickly reduced to a pitted wisp of his formerly bad self. Johnny's reckless bard, Embry, was next to board the hereafter train. No one was surprised that the pyromaniac half-elf went up in flames, but the twist was that he didn't deepfry himself—Zulzuul, a giant undead myconid king, was the one who cast the killing *fireball*.

In both cases (well, at least in Sevet's), all of us players were shocked at the sudden loss of a comrade, but at least we had a body to cart back to the temple of Pelor. Last night, however, when the derro sorcerer Marzod disintegrated Gunthar, Shawn's halfling ranger, the silence was so deep that we heard the frogs chirping from the marshy lot across the street. How would we get him back without a body?

Death's one thing, but *disintegration*?

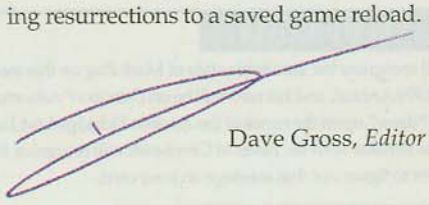
More urgently, where was Marzod pointing that *disintegrator* rod next?

There's nothing like the death of another PC to remind you of your character's fragility. When Gunthar vanished in a stream of particles, we weren't just angry—we were scared. Sean's dwarven fighter was in the worst spot, stunned to inaction scant feet from Marzod and his wiggly beholder eye on a stick. When Marzod pointed that disintegrator at Yun Fa, my monk, I lost my voice. It's one thing to talk smack to a doppleganger who's just stabbed you with a poisoned dagger (as happened last week), but after a 17th-level sorcerer totally obliterates one of your pals, it's hard to come up with snappy banter.

The one good thing about these moments is that they provide a great thrill. Provided you can survive the rest of the encounter, the rest of the conflict is a heck of a lot more exciting. In the aftermath, however, you've either got to deal with the loss of a companion or else find a way to bring him back without cheapening his death. If you could just reload a saved game, then the character would never have come to mean much in the first place. Yet because the character means a lot—and not just to his player—many DMs will give you a way to bring back the dead. Clever ones will make sure you can't use the same method twice, making each effort to restore a lost character both interesting and challenging.

To restore Sevet from his charry plight, our cleric had to sacrifice a radiance crystal (an important magic item) and accept a big karma debt from her deity. Embry's resuscitation required tricky negotiations with a shady spore dealer who provided just enough of the icky stuff for a single reanimation. While we haven't managed to recover Gunthar yet, we did free a celestial from a magical prison after cutting Marzod down, so we're hopeful that she can call in a favor from one of the big guys for us.

How do you deal with character deaths and resurrections in your campaign? Is it too hard or too easy? Share your tips on staying alive without reducing resurrections to a saved game reload.



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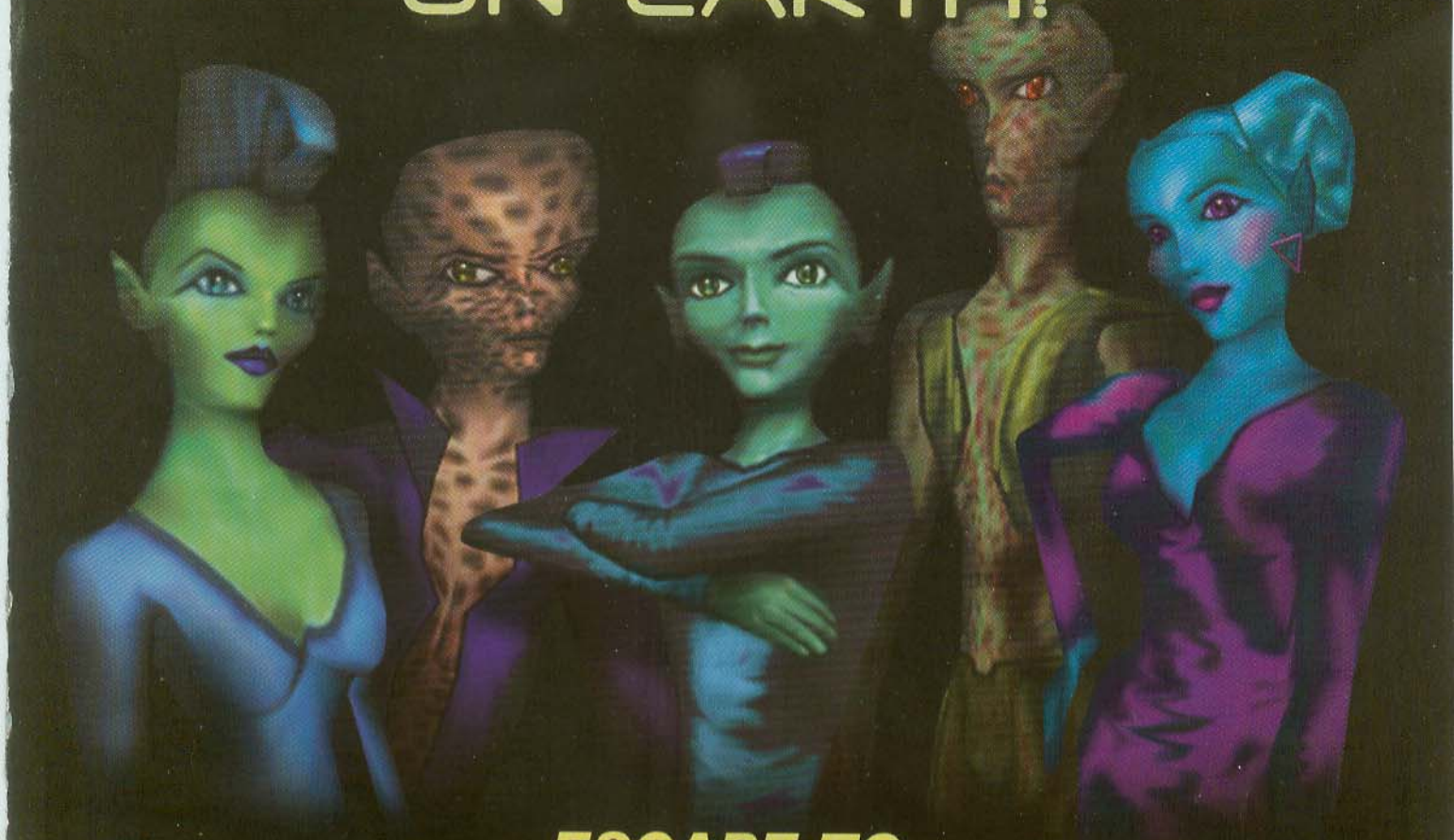

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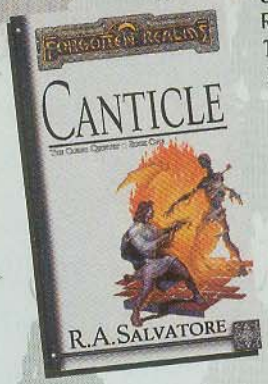

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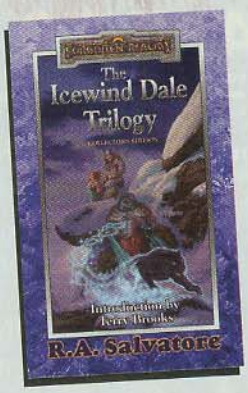

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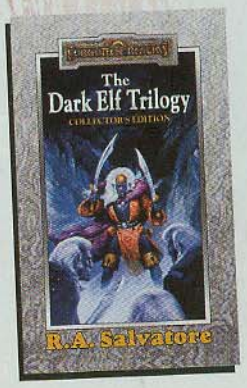

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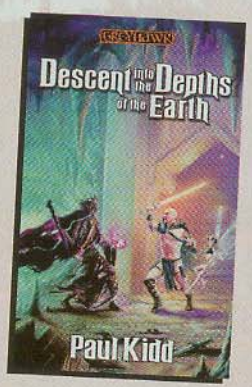

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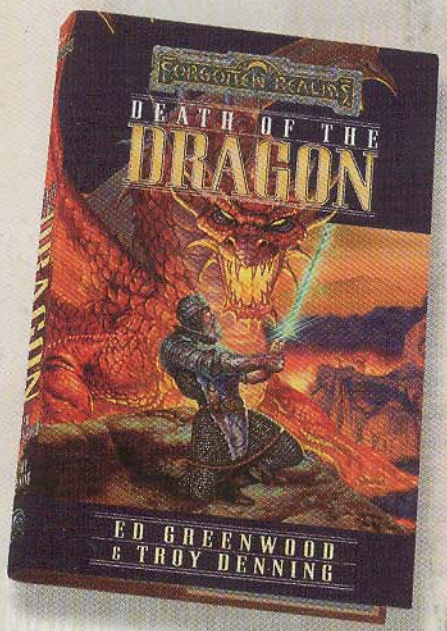

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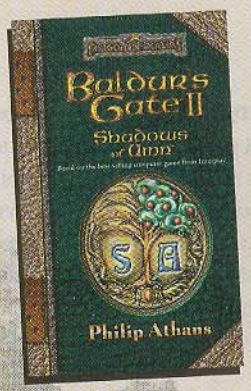

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Philip Athans

Shadow thieves, vampires, and rockworms run rampant on the Sword Coast in the action-packed novelization of the **Baldur's Gate II** computer game from BioWare and Interplay.

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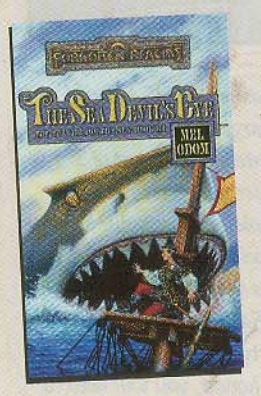

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Obsolete Supplements

I have been a dedicated player of the AD&D® game for more than eleven years and have read and enjoyed *DRAGON® Magazine* for most of that time. The magazine is currently undergoing some changes that are making each issue an improvement on the previous. Keep up the good work!

I am writing because, according to the "Countdown to 3rd Edition" article in issue #267, the cleric class is due for a major overhaul. While I am not averse to improvements for that class, the information published in the article raises some questions I would like answered.

Will the 3rd Edition rulebooks contain some kind of listing of the changes in spell levels ...?

The article states that the spell system for clerics will be redesigned to contain spells of levels 0–9. This would be fine by me were it not for the fact that I have recently purchased the *Priest's Spell Compendium, Vol. 1* and *Vol. 2*. Will the release of the 3rd Edition D&D® game render the *Priest's Spell Compendium* books obsolete and useless even before the third volume is released? Will the 3rd Edition rulebooks contain some kind of listing of the changes in spell levels for priest spells in the Compendiums or rules for converting 2nd Edition spells? Is it worth the effort to buy the third volume when it is released, or would it merely be a waste of hard-earned cash?

I hope that this matter is being given some thought before the 3rd Edition D&D rulebooks hit the streets. If not, I would consider it a testament to my worst fears concerning the people controlling the future of the game we all love. Please tell me I'm wrong about greed being in charge of the destiny of our game.

Leif F. Alveen
Sofieholm 5
DK-9270 Klarup
Denmark

Our company is based in the USA, Leif, where greed is in charge of the destiny of everything. Fortunately, the advent of 3rd Edition doesn't render your Priest's Spell Compendium *obsolete. Those volumes contain thousands of spells gleaned from fifteen years of the previous edition. It'll be a long time before the 3rd Edition rules come close to such a wide variety of spells.*

To be completely honest, you will need to do some conversions to make those 2nd Edition spells completely "3E compliant." Fortunately, such spell conversions should be easy, especially with the 3rd Edition Conversion Handbook, *which we'll give you free with this very magazine in July. With it, you should be able to translate pretty much anything from 2nd Edition to 3rd.*

Point and Counterpoint

I have enjoyed the "Countdown to 3rd Edition" feature over the last six months, and I am looking forward to the official release of 3rd Edition. Up until now, I have, for the most part, wholeheartedly agreed with the proposed changes to our beloved format of gaming. Much like the computer and Internet industry, it is only logical that the D&D game be refined and tweaked to make it a more comprehensive and adaptable gaming system. By this, I point out the oversimplified fact that the majority of us don't use a 286 EGA computer anymore, simply because there are more powerful computers available now.

However, I am writing in reference to the "Countdown to 3rd Edition" article entitled "Wizards and Magic," which appeared in *DRAGON Magazine* issue #268. More specifically, I am a bit confused and curious as to the timing aspect of counterspelling. The article reads, "Say you have a *fireball* spell memorized, and you notice—after a successful Spellcraft check—that one of your opponents is about to cast the same spell. Rather than take your chances on a saving throw for half damage, you can cast your own *fireball* as a counterspell, neutralizing your opponent's attack." How is this accomplished, assuming Jonathan Tweet's statement that, "Every spell is its own counterspell"? I am taking this to mean that the *fireball* spell being used to counter must be cast in its entirety to disrupt the original *fireball's* effects.

It seems obvious that you would need to have *fireball* memorized, but unless your opponent has thought bubbles overhead displaying his intentions, a Spellcraft check would not even be appropriate, at least not until he began speaking the incantations of the spell. Only after it is obvious to the PC that the opponent is casting a spell should she be allowed to attempt a Spellcraft check.

Keeping in mind the chaos of battle, a character would have to position herself so she would be able to see the opponent, as well as hear him clearly enough, to decipher the arcane words of power. It does not seem inappropriate to say that it takes a certain amount of time to attempt a Spellcraft check.

If the check succeeds and the character knows the opponent is going to cast a *fireball*, the player can quickly state, "I'm counterspelling," and begin to cast her own *fireball*, requiring her to go through the exact same steps your opponent has already performed (retrieving spell components from a spell pouch or robe, as well as the actual manipulations of the material components in her hands).

There is just one problem: You won't have enough time. By the time you begin casting, your opponent is halfway through with his incantation. Long before you finish your *fireball*, your opponent is laughing as his goes off, presumably right under your nose. Not only do you take damage from the enemy's spell, but you lose your own, due to the fact that your concentration is broken. This is not a good thing, and this scenario applies to a spell with a longer casting time. Imagine trying to counterspell *magic missile* or *burning hands*.

Will wizards who want to counterspell be required to attempt a metamagic feat to "Quicken" their casting speed in an attempt to beat their opponent at finishing the *fireball*? Or should we assume that the counterspell is a shorter version of its counterpart spell (going against Mr. Tweet's statement quoted earlier)? Is the counterspell a chant of some kind, breaking up the energies of the opponent's *fireball* while wiping the PC's memory of the spell clean as well? What would happen if two friendly mages cast *fireballs* at an opponent at the same time? Would they cancel each other out?

Please, don't get me wrong. I love the concept of counterspelling. However, I think it's still a little rough around the edges. Suspension of disbelief is an integral part of the game, but the mechanics and timing effects must still follow certain rules, or, at the very least, have a bit of supportive reasoning behind them.

Karl Doiron
Brooklyn, NY

That's a good question, and luckily there's a good answer: To cast a spell as a counterspell, a wizard or sorcerer must have a ready action—a concept not yet described in the "Countdown" articles.

Basically, when you encounter an enemy spellcaster, you declare, "I'm getting ready to counterspell anything that guy throws at us." Your character doesn't act until your target starts casting a spell. When he does, you make a successful Spellcraft check to identify the spell; if you have the same spell prepared, you can cast it as a counterspell. You're not actually casting another fireball*; you're casting a* fireball *counterspell. If you don't mind your enemy's spell succeeding, you could just cast your own* fireball *back at him and not worry about having a ready action or making a Spellcraft check.*

As for the momentary delay in starting a counterspell after identifying the spell your opponent is casting, the 3E spell system simply isn't that precise. As long as you have the spell prepared, ready an action, and make your Spellcraft check, it works.

Remember that the "Countdown to 3rd Edition" articles are previews only. While we want to give you a good idea of how the new system works, we're bound to leave out many refining details. If you see something that seems confusing, follow Karl's lead and sent us a note. We'll clear things up for you!

Player of the Month

Mark Anderson: Great player or multiple personality?

I have known Mark for most of my life, and a good portion of that as a gamer. His abilities as either player or DM are impressive. His knowledge of rules is second only to his skill as a player. With any roleplaying game, his characters are unique individuals, each with a history and personality that are played out with the skill of an actor and developed with the creativity of an author.

During one campaign we played in, Mark had the challenge of playing two characters at once. Even though they were both valley elf rangers and brother and sister, they both had different personalities that Mark brought out in play.

Tisha had an aloof yet kind personality. In a party of mostly male party members, including a grey elven noble, she fended off verbal advances and racial biases with grace and dignity. When defending the forests and animals she loved, she had a gentle manner that spoke of strength and courage.

Thistle, Tisha's brother, was a well-meaning bumbler, not accident-prone but guilty of doing the wrong thing for the right reasons. He would think with his heart and instinct rather than intelligence and wisdom. More outspoken than his sister, he spoke with a love of friends and humor that was infectious.

Mark is always willing to learn new games, as either a player or DM, and sometimes both. Mark is also a teacher, sharing those games that he enjoys with anyone willing to learn. His patience with his students is great, and even accomplished players can learn something new from him, or find a new perspective on an old concept. He is also a capable storyteller, weaving tales with none of the five senses left out, all with his voice and imagination.

Mark was one of our group who developed the technique of "chaptering," or "free-form gaming." More than just "making it up" as he went along, Mark crafted worlds beforehand and then fleshed them out in play. In one campaign I was playing a sea elf. Mark's descriptions gave me the sensation of tall, heaving ships, spray on my face, and the taste of sea salt in my mouth. Land was no different—feeling the bustle of the marketplace in town, seeing the vendors with carts and booths selling their wares.

Mark is an overall well-rounded gamer. For this, as well as his friendship and values, I nominate him for Player of the Month. —*Michael S. Webster*

Stop the Torture!

I would like to start by saying that I hope that no one on your staff has a *remove curse* spell memorized, because I am cursing all of you evil people!

This is because of the way that you are handling the release of the 3rd Edition rules. When I first saw the "Countdown to Third Edition," I was excited, since I

have played this game since the time when a dwarf was not only a race but also a class. Then I read that not everything that is released in these articles is going to be included in the final revision. I was extremely upset. What if some of the best parts are left out? Of course, as with the 2nd Edition, I know that we are free to use what we want and change anything, but I was hoping that maybe also announce the exact date of release as soon as possible. I intend to be one of the first to purchase the new edition. Actually I will probably have to purchase two, because my wife will steal my copy if I only get one. Keep up the good work, or may your hands shrivel up and your hard drives crash!

Vincent C. Bonica, Jr.
South Bound Book, NJ

Keep up the good work, or may your hands shrivel and your hard drives crash!

for the first time since the red boxed set was released I would be satisfied with almost all of the rules.

All you are doing is torturing us, dropping little morsels of food to starving people. I hope that you are at least trying to include the most up-to-date information in these articles. Upon reading the article about clerics I was ecstatic; someone might voluntarily play one of these. This was the greatest change in clerics since the DARK SUN® setting introduced the elemental cleric. But as quickly as the joy came to me, it left when I remembered that these changes might themselves be changed. Now, in issue #268, you reveal some information about wizards. I like this also, but how much will survive the editor's pen?

All I want to know is, when 3rd Edition is finally ready, will we recognize it as the 3rd Edition from all the "Countdown" articles? Oh, by the way, if the answer is yes then you don't have to worry about that curse. I hope that you

Yes! We finally made someone snap with our deliberately tantalizing clues about the upcoming edition.

Fortunately for our hands and hard drives, the "Countdown" information is pretty solid, and it grows more reliable as we move closer to the August 10 release of the new edition. You should expect some differences when the books arrive, but not many. As we write these words, the Player's Handbook *is almost through editing, and the changes of the past few months have been small but important refinements rather than radical changes to the design. So yes, you'll recognize 3rd Edition when it premiers at the GEN CON® Game Fair, though there's far, far more in the core books than we'll have previewed in the "Countdown" articles. While you won't find many differences, you'll certainly find a great deal more information.*

So hold off on those curses, will ya?

Liking the New Look for 3E

I have a question regarding the article "Feathered Friends and Foes" in *DRAGON Magazine* #266. In the sidebars listing the ability score adjustments there is also a class restrictions section. Are the listed levels the maximum level attainable by the shapeshifter in question, or are they the minimum level requirements for PCs being inducted into the society? Also, throughout the article the "human form" is referred to. Is it possible to have demihuman laridians or thebestyns?

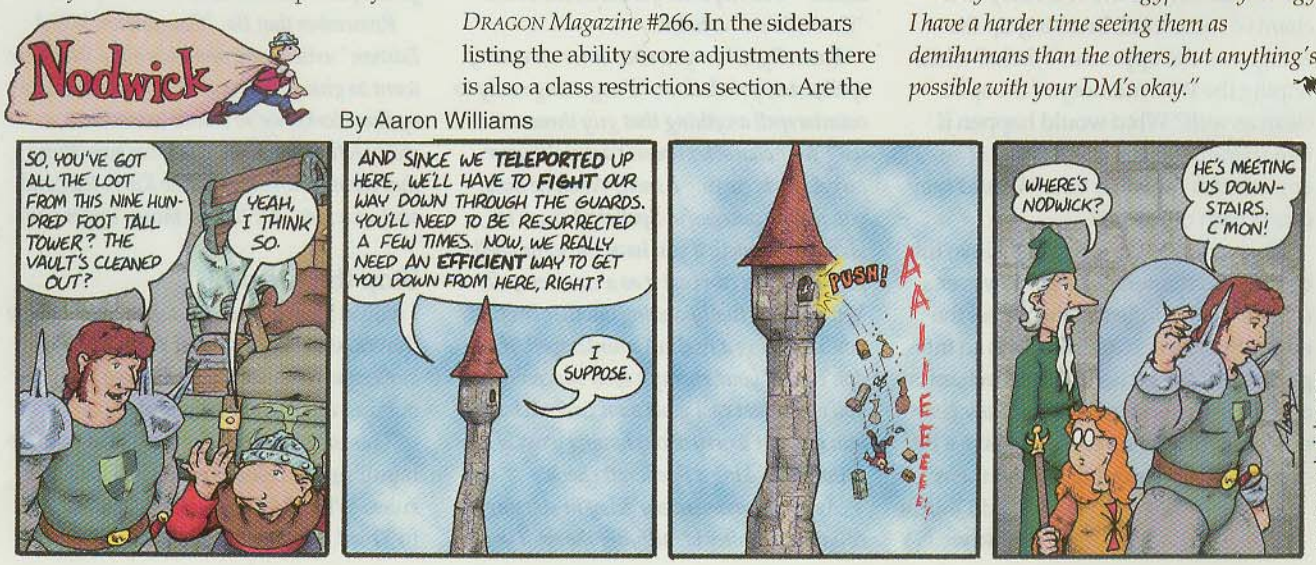
On a different note, I would like to congratulate Wizards of the Coast on its excellent choice of artists for the new 3rd Edition books. The concept sketches I've seen in the magazine are awesome; Todd Lockwood and Sam Wood are truly brilliant! I was disappointed with the artwork in the 1995 releases of the *Player's Handbook* and *DUNGEON MASTER® Guide*, but my faith has returned with these glimpses of what's to come. Is there any chance of releasing a book containing all the concept sketches for 3rd Edition? A sort of "3rd Edition Scrapbook," maybe even with notes on why changes were made and thoughts from the designers.

Congratulations on a great magazine, and keep up the good work.

Mischa Pringle
Tasmania, Australia

Former freelance writer (and reformed editor-stalker) James Wyatt has recently joined the Wizards of the Coast design staff, so it was easy to ask him for an answer to the "Feathered Friends and Foes" question. Here it is:

"The listed levels are the maximum levels attainable, as in the Complete Book of Humanoids *entry for swanmays. Whether to allow demihumans to enter any of these societies is purely a DM decision. Since the thebestyns are based on Egyptian mythology, I have a harder time seeing them as demihumans than the others, but anything's possible with your DM's okay."*


Nodwick
By Aaron Williams
SO, YOU'VE GOT ALL THE LOOT FROM THIS NINE HUNDRED FOOT TALL TOWER? THE VAULT'S CLEANED OUT?
YEAH, I THINK SO.
AND SINCE WE TELEPORTED UP HERE, WE'LL HAVE TO FIGHT OUR WAY DOWN THROUGH THE GUARDS. YOU'LL NEED TO BE RESURRECTED A FEW TIMES. NOW, WE REALLY NEED AN EFFICIENT WAY TO GET YOU DOWN FROM HERE, RIGHT?
I SUPPOSE.
PUSH!
AIIEEEE!
WHERE'S NODWICK?
HE'S MEETING US DOWNSTAIRS. C'MON!
www.nodwick.com

May Chat Events

RPGA Tonight

Join top members of the RPGA® Network for a discussion of the latest events and topics. **5/2** & **5/16**

RPG Hour

D&D® Reverse Dungeon

So who always wants to be the good guy? If the answer is "Not me!" then look to the *Reverse Dungeon* for your next game. Play a monster who just wants to defend its pleasantly dank abode from those nasty, light-fingered adventurers who are always underfoot! **5/5**

3rd Edition Monks

An old class made new, we announce the return of monks as a recognized character class in D&D 3rd Edition. Discussing the concept of "chi" and highlighting powers available only to monks, artist Todd Lockwood and designer Jonathan Tweet will discuss how 3E reinvests prestige into this unique class. **5/19**

Deck Deconstruction Seminar

Deconstructing U.S. Regional Decks

We're proud to present a new monthly show hosted by former Pro Tour™ player Randy Beuhler, who discusses the theory of a deck that you've voted for on-line. Choose one of the break-out decks from U.S. Regionals for Randy to pull apart and clue you in to what the pros know. **5/9**

TCG Hour

POKÉMON® Rocket

Dastardly Team Rocket has struck again! Find out the details of their latest crazy machines and sinister attacks from Game Designer Robert Gutschera and Brand Manager Carole Pucik. **5/12**

Joe Speaks!

The hour where you have a personal contact to give you the scoop on the big picture on MAGIC: THE GATHERING®—Joe Hauck, brand manager and the official spokesman of the game. This month, Joe gives his wrap up of the MAGIC Pro Tour season. **5/26**

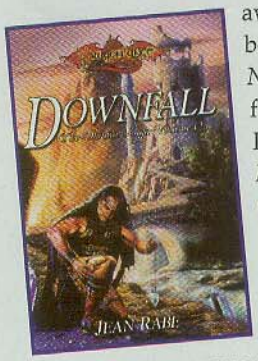
May Chat Calendar

Date	Time	Show
2	4–5 P.M.	MAGIC® Online Help
2	6–7 P.M.	RPGA Tonight
5	6–7 P.M.	RPG Hour
7	6–7 P.M.	From the Dragon's Mouth
9	4–5 P.M.	MAGIC Online Help
9	5–6 P.M.	Deck Deconstruction
11	4–5 P.M.	POKÉMON Online Help
12	6–7 P.M.	TCG Hour
13	8:55 P.M.	Totally Twisted Trivia
14	6–7 P.M.	Designers' Guild
16	4–5 P.M.	MAGIC Online Help
16	6–7 P.M.	RPGA Tonight
18	4–5 P.M.	POKÉMON Online Help
19	6–7 P.M.	RPG Hour
21	6–7 P.M.	Industry Edge
23	4–5 P.M.	MAGIC Online Help
23	6–7 P.M.	Wizards Profiles
20	4–5 P.M.	POKÉMON Online Help
26	6–7 P.M.	TCG Hour
27	8:55 P.M.	Totally Twisted Trivia
28	6–7 P.M.	Sage Advice Live!
30	4–5 P.M.	MAGIC Online Help

All times are Pacific Standard Time.

For the most up-to-date chat events information, the roleplaying gaming schedule, and Customer Service TCG online help times, please visit the calendars at
www.wizards.com/chat

Wizards Profiles



Author Jean Rabe discusses her long awaited sequel to the bestselling *Dragons of a New Age* trilogy, Downfall, The Dhamon Saga. In *Downfall, Hero of the Heart,* Dhamon Grimwulf has sunk to a life of crime and squalor while the dragon overlords strengthen their hold over the land. Now, Dhamon must find the will to redeem or lose himself forever. **5/23**

Totally Twisted Trivia

Been playing D&D® since you were just out of the cradle? Own every supplement TSR ever printed? Well, even if you don't, we invite you to test your knowledge in the Totally Twisted Trivia game. Prizes will be awarded! **5/13** & **5/27**

Designers' Guild

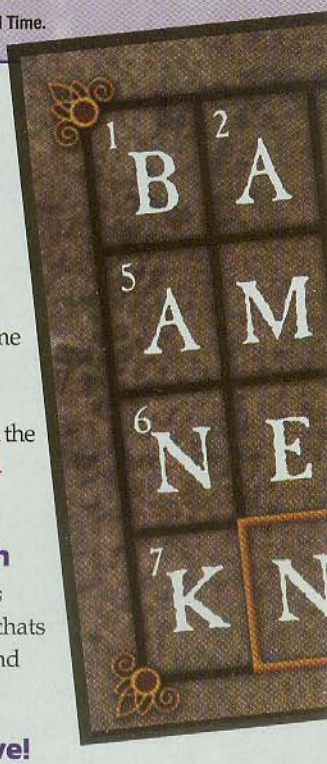
Producer Chris Parker joins us to talk about the upcoming electronic game release of *Icewind Dale,* from the setting of R. A. Salvatore's beloved FORGOTTEN REALMS® trilogy of the same name. **5/14**

Industry Edge

Senior Art Director Ron Spears and artist rk post talk about their latest work on the MAGIC: THE GATHERING *Prophecy* expansion and welcome your questions about their experiences as artists working within the gaming industry. **5/21**

From the Dragon's Mouth

DUNGEON® Adventures editor Chris Perkins chats about great riddles and puzzles. **5/7**



Sage Advice Live!

Think you can stump the Sage with your questions about the D&D, ALTERNITY®, and MARVEL® roleplaying games? It's tougher than you think! **5/28**

Grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change.

The courage to change the things I can. And the wisdom to know when to zone.

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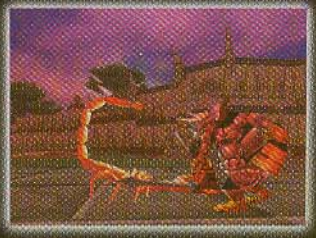

Convention Calendar

May

Fantasy Fair X
May 21 ✪
The Cresset Exhibition Centre,
Peterborough, UK.
Contact: 5 Arran Close
Holmes Chapel
Cheshire
CW4 7QP
United Kingdom.

LAIRE-CON
May 12–14 NJ
Camp Sacajewia, New Jersey.
Contact: Adam Krat.
Email: mayoraloe@aol.com

MISCON 2000
May 26–28 MT
Double Tree Hotel Edgewater,
Missoula, MT.
Contact: MISCON
P.O. Box 7721
Missoula, MT 59807.

June

LAIRE-CON
June 2–4 NJ
Camp Sacajewia, New Jersey.
Contact: Adam Krat.
Email: mayoraloe@aol.com

Milwaukee Summer Revel 4
June 15–18 WI
Sheraton Milwaukee, Milwaukee, WI.
Contact: Milwaukee Summer Revel
P.O. Box 779
New Munster, WI 53152.
Website: www.rli-net/
~melka/msr/index.htm

July

LAIRE-CON
July 7–9 NJ
Camp Sacajewia, New Jersey.
Contact: Adam Krat.
Email: mayoraloe@aol.com

ORIGINS
July 13–16 OH
Columbus Conventions Center
Contact: Wizards of the Coast
P.O.Box 1740
Renton, WA 98057
Website: www.wizards.com/origins

Patriot Games
July 13–16 VA
Holiday Inn Express,
Fredersicksburg, VA.
Contact: David T. Darnell.
Website: www.VRPA.org/
PatriotGames.html
Email: David.Darnell@VRPA.org

August

GenCon Game Fair
August 10–13 WI
Midwest Express Center
Milwaukee, WI
Contact: Wizards of the Coast
P.O.Box 1740
Renton, WA 98057
Website: www.wizards.com/gencon

LAIRE-CON
August 11–13 NJ
Camp Sacajewia, New Jersey.
Contact: Adam Krat.
Email: mayoraloe@aol.com

BUBONICON 32
August 25–27 NM
Howard Johnson East
Albuquerque, NM
Contact: NMSF Conference
PO Box 37257
Albuquerque, NM 87176
Email: cwcraig@nmia.com
Website: www.members.aol.com/
bubonicon

September

Trinoc-coN 2000
September 29–October 1 NC
Durham Marriott & Civic Center,
Durham North
Gaming GOH: Skip Williams
Contact: Trinoc-coN
PO Box 10633
Raleigh NC 27605-0633
Email: trinoccon@aol.com
Website: www.trinoc-con.org

Convention Calendar Policies

This column is a service to our readers worldwide. Anyone may place a free listing for a game convention here, but the following guidelines must be observed.

To ensure that all convention listings contain accurate and timely information, all material should be typed double-spaced or printed legibly on standard manuscript paper. The contents of each listing must be short and succinct.

The information given in the listing must include the following, in this order:

1. Convention title and dates held
2. Site and location
3. Address(es) where additional information and confirmation can be obtained.

Convention flyers, newsletters, and other mass-mailed announcements will not be considered for use in this column; we prefer to see a cover letter with the announcement as well. No call-in listings are accepted.

Warning: We are not responsible for incorrect information sent to us by convention staff members. Please check your convention listing carefully! Accurate information is your responsibility.

Copy deadlines are the first Monday of each month, four months prior to the on sale date of an issue. Thus, the copy deadline for the December issue is the first Monday of September. Announcements for all conventions must be mailed to: "Conventions," *DRAGON® Magazine*, 1801 Lind Avenue S.W., Renton, WA, 98055, U.S.A.

If a convention listing must be changed because the convention has been cancelled, the dates have changed, or incorrect information has been printed, please contact us immediately. Most questions or changes should be directed to the magazine editors at (425) 254-2985 (U.S.A.).

Important: *DRAGON Magazine* does not publish phone numbers for conventions. Be certain that any address you send us is complete and correct.

To ensure that your convention listing makes it into our files, enclose a self-addressed stamped postcard with your first convention notice; we will return the card to show that it was received. You also might send a second notice one week after mailing the first. Mail your listing as early as possible, and always keep us informed of any changes. Please do not send convention notices by fax, as this method has not proven reliable.

❖ Australian convention
✳ Canadian convention
✪ European convention
💻 Online convention

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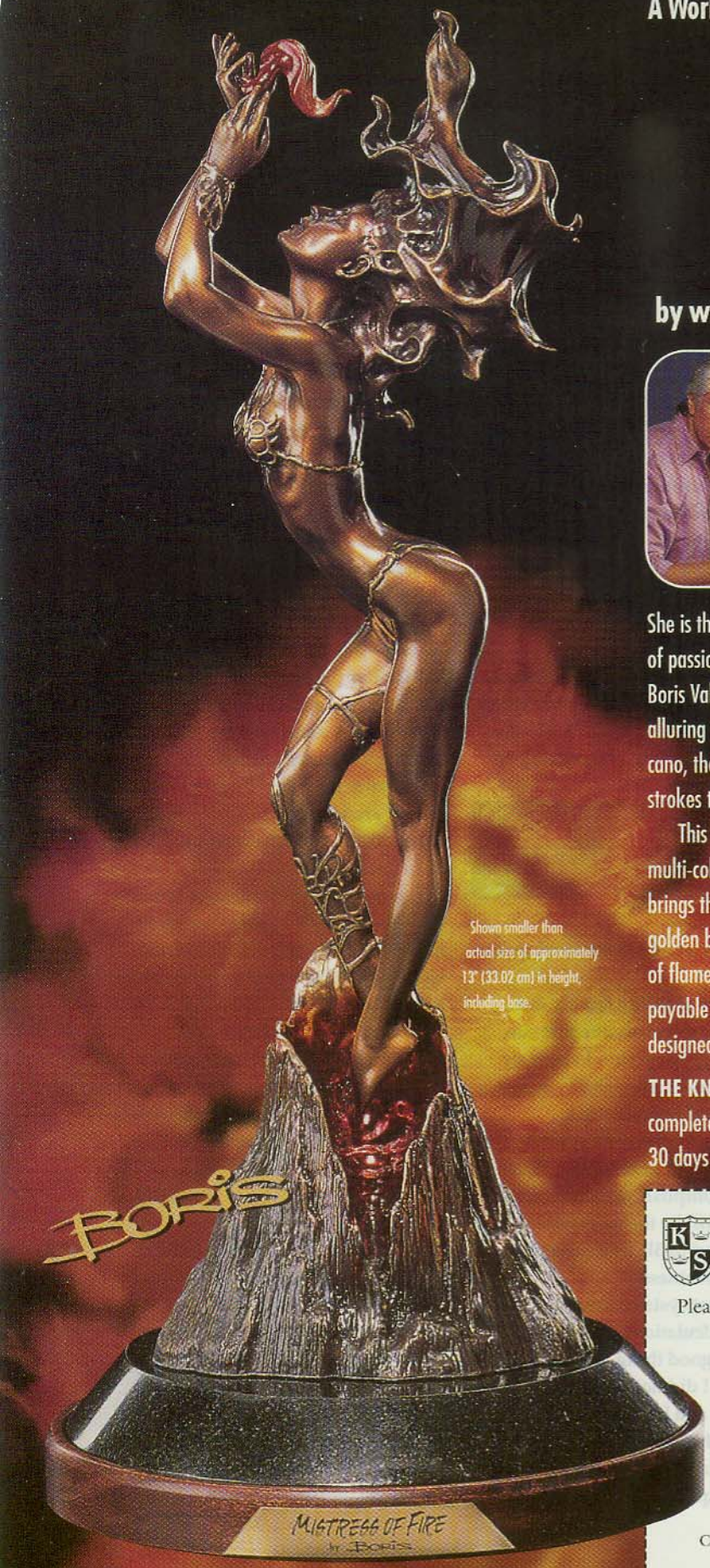

Shown smaller than actual size of approximately 13" (33.02 cm) in height, including base.

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Forum

Question of the Month

Respond to the Question of the Month or any other roleplaying topic by mailing "Forum," DRAGON® magazine, ***1801 Lind Avenue S.W., Renton, WA 98055, USA; dmail@wizards.com.*** Include your full name and mailing address; we won't print a letter sent anonymously. We'll withhold your name or print your full address if you wish.

HAVE YOU BASED ADVENTURES ON HISTORICAL OR LEGENDARY TALES? WHICH ARE YOUR FAVORITES, AND WHY?

3E Comments

Despite approving of most of what I have read regarding 3E, I must weigh in my two copper pieces on a hodge-podge of recent developments.

First off, well done on the new artwork. I always felt that both 1st and 2nd Edition lacked a certain "coolness" factor as far as the artwork was concerned. Larry Elmore, Jeff Easley, and Clyde Caldwell are certainly capable artists; however, I never felt their styles projected the game in quite the correct light. The D&D® game has long needed a visual overhaul with just a mite more edginess.

The interior art for the books has been, sad to say, sad. My wife, a non-gamer with no D&D experience, was thumbing through the 2E *Player's Handbook* and stated, "No wonder everyone started playing TCGs—the art and visuals are so much more enticing." As far as historical accuracy and real-world practicality goes in terms of armor and the overall look of the characters, don't worry about it. This is a fantasy game with only loose ties to a true medieval setting, so make the characters look great with an air of the fantastic. If the game has stunning visuals and presentation, I believe this will help draw new players in.

More kudos on the elimination of the "thief" for a more general stealth-based rogue. I railed on this in issue #266 and found that the January playtest group of the month for 3E on your website got the turnaround that was needed. After looking at the priest's and wizard's teasers in *DRAGON® Magazine* #267 and #268, I am daring to be optimistic that some of the inherent problems with the thief class will finally be repaired.

More spells at low level: Yes! Wizards should not have a 1st-level mortality rate that is inherently higher than any other class.

Spontaneous spell casting for priests: *Muy excellente*. Swapping healing spells for other spells is a stroke of brilliance. Promote the individual responsible for this idea. Two attacks at 8th level seems a bit much.

> ***Swapping healing spells for other spells is a stroke of brilliance.***

Progression of ability scores: *Yeah, baby, yeah!* Almost everyone that survives to be high level should be truly heroic in scope—higher ability scores help reinforce this perception.

Feats: More coolness. PCs should have the option of tossing up a "Hail, Mary" to accomplish wondrous feats. I believe this will be the most well-received aspect of 3E, as it promotes daring and greatness.

New combat system: Anything that turns table calculations into simple addition is a good thing. I am almost embarrassed I did not think of this and implement it as a house rule.

Return of the assassin: The argument that anyone can kill a person for money and that it requires no special skills is a fallacy. Yes, anyone can take money and attempt to kill someone; however, there will always be those that are trained to do it, and that is the distinction. Anyone can pick up a sword and start swinging, yet that does not make them a warrior. So too, there is a distinction between a hired killer and a well-trained professional. Consider a drive-by shooting in relation to a trained government special forces commando—a multiverse of difference.

Familiar progression: Another winner. So many spellcasters I have played with refuse to even consider finding a familiar, because the creatures are somewhat "fragile," and the mages are afraid of the risk. The new rules should bring new meaning to the term "animal lover."

Counterspells: As Cartman would say, "Hella cool!" I always believed lower-level characters should have some last ditch chance to foil a spell or two of the fearsome and mighty. This should work quite nicely.

New initiative system: Boo! Hiss! There is simplified, and then there is oversimplified. Weapon speed factors should not have been dropped.

Lance Goetz
Portland, OR

Two DMs Better Than One

This letter is in regards to "The Wyrm's Turn" from issue #268.

Three years ago I began to share the DM role with our (until then) permanent DM, Pete. He has been running our campaigns since the 1st Edition days. However, responsibility being commensurate with age, he found his preparation time, let alone

actual gaming time, to be at a premium. Add to that the incessant pestering of players, "Hey man, when are we gonna play?" and you've got a great deal of pressure on a sole DM. This is a less-than-ideal environment for creativity.

The addition of another DM not only alleviated this problem but also enhanced the overall quality of our gaming. Pete and I presently run two separate campaigns—a GREYHAWK® and a FORGOTTEN REALMS® campaign. Players have different PCs in each and enjoy the diversity. In one campaign, they might be playing mage characters—hanging back, weaving spells. In the other campaign, they might be playing fighters—standing in, metal singing on metal. Different DMs also have invariably different styles. These differences help keep our campaigns out of the mundane ruts they so easily fall into.

One bit of advice I can impart to any first-time DM is to co-DM with your regular DM for a little while. When I began, I spent three or four nights working out the kinks behind the screen with Pete in an advisory role. This helped me get a feel for the mechanics of the DM role, while Pete's assistance maintained game flow, reducing the inevitable fumblings of a neophyte DM.

Lastly, two DMs create a friendly rivalry. I know for certain that Pete's interest in DMing has escalated since I began to share the role, and I feel the need to keep up with the original master. We use one another as sounding boards for ideas and constantly brainstorm to improve our game worlds.

Brian Moran
Lakewood, OH

Mixing Your Genres

After reading Randy Bisig's letter from issue #267, where he says that vampires and other elements of horror don't belong in a science fiction setting, I have a question for Mr. Bisig: Just how big a fan of sci-fi are you?

Classic and contemporary science fiction is loaded with episodes where horror, and the occasional vampire, play a big part. Take, for example, the original *Star Trek*. Captain James Kirk and crew faced vampiric creatures on at least two occasions. In the episode entitled "Obsession," they faced a gaseous creature that fed on blood, much like the AD&D® monster called the crimson death mist—a type of vampire in my book. Another alien they faced was a shapeshifting, hypnotic creature that Trekkies are fond of calling "The Salt Vampire." It possessed the ability to shapeshift, the power to charm, and it fed on vital human minerals—sounds like a vampire to me!

Another series that used to be popular was the 70s hit *Buck Rogers*. In one episode, Buck faced an alien that even looked like a vampire. It had fangs, a bald head, and pointy ears. It could hypnotize people, drain their life energy, and was killed when it was exposed to the stellar energy of a star—just like a vampire's reaction to sunlight.

Science fiction and fantasy are related genres and are interchangeable.

In addition, gothic-style horror indeed has a place in science fiction. Remember the *Star Trek: The Next Generation* episode where Tasha Yar is killed by a being of pure evil? That's a great example of classic psychological terror. Remember the original *Star Trek* episode called "Devil in the Dark" (one of my personal favorites), in which miners in the dark depths of a planet were being slain by a shadowy monster, later revealed to be a "horta," and a mother defending her young?

And what of comic books, which today are more science fiction than fantasy? Superman, Batman, Spider-Man, and the X-Men have all opposed vampires, werewolves, ghosts, witches, fairies, and other spooky things in their long careers.

Don't even get me started on *The X-Files*!

What I'm saying is this: Science fiction and fantasy are related genres and are interchangeable. Some would say science fiction is a *type* of fantasy. They are not polar opposites. If the AD&D world can have computerized robots (remember the sheens from issues #258 and #270?), then the ALTERNITY® game can certainly have vampires. That is what makes fantasy and sci-fi so great: In their realms, literally anything can happen. The only limit to the fantasy writer is his imagination.

Brian Corvello
Washington Depot, CT

Get Back to Our Roots

Although most letters to this column seem to deal with such matters as whether those who use the *PLAYER'S OPTION®: Skills & Powers* rules should allow 19 Muscle sub-abilities or whether pixie PCs should be allowed to multiclass, there are other topics of interest to roleplaying gamers as well. There is nothing wrong with discussions of game mechanics, but variety is the spice of life. So I thought it might be interesting to take a look back at many of the fundamental concepts and philosophies of roleplaying, and how, although they are now taken for granted as "givens," most actually have their origins in the works of J.R.R. Tolkien—and how many have lost their original meaning.

First off, it should be noted that J.R.R. Tolkien's works are more than a famous fantasy trilogy. They are one of the twentieth century's greatest literary works. Taken as a whole with the *Silmarillion* and other Tolkien materials, they have the grandeur, philosophical depth, dignity, and artistic merit of any of the great myth-cycles of antiquity.

To return to the theme, even one of the most basic concepts of roleplaying, the adventuring party, is actually a cheap knock-off of a Tolkien concept. In most epic adventures of literature and legend, there is only one hero, or at most a pair of companions. Adventuring parties are, basically, imitations of the Fellowship that accompanied the Ringbearer, Frodo, on his quest. Frodo's companions were chosen to aid him and were "selected" as accredited representatives of their nations. The hobbits came along as his friends, but Aragorn came as the heir to the throne

of Gondor, Boromir as an envoy of Gondor, Legolas as an envoy of the elves, and Gimli as an envoy of the dwarves. These representatives were chosen as Frodo's companions because the fate of their respective peoples all depended on the outcome of the quest, and so it was judged that each nation contribute to helping the quest succeed. Roleplaying games have retained the adventuring party concept while doing away with or changing the logical explanation for them. The Fellowship of the Ring existed for specific reasons. It has been copied outwardly as the mixed-race adventuring party, but its purpose has changed to a mercenary band whose variety of personnel is intended to provide a broad range of skills.

I know my group, and if I suspended a 50-foot stuffed pig from some sturdy chains ... there would be no way of stopping them from trying to swat the porcine piñata ...

The dungeon, another roleplaying staple, is actually an imitation of the mines of Moria, which was not actually a dungeon but an abandoned dwarven city occupied by orcish troops from Sauron's army. Readers of Tolkien will find many dungeon stand-bys that have their real roots in the city of Khazad-Dum—the ideas of levels, secret doors (the west gate of Moria), and branching chambers and corridors are all to be found in Moria. Of course, in dispensing with the "abandoned dwarven city" concept, the dungeon has become totally illogical and ludicrous. They are true caricatures, a purposeless maze used as a sort of Monster Bank and Trust or E-Z Loot Withdrawal. Of course, they are also fun, but the concept is sophomoric, nonetheless.

Finally, there are the elves. Roleplaying games took the names of Tolkien elf-classifications—high elves, grey elves, wood elves, and dark elves—and turned them into separate breeds of elves as if they were different breeds of dogs. Originally, though, it was just how much contact the elves in question had with the Valar (gods) that determined their classification. For example, the high elves had left Middle Earth and journeyed to Valinor, the realm of the Valar, and returned. The grey elves remained in Middle Earth, like the dark elves, but came in contact with those of the Valar who visited Middle Earth. The dark elves never came in contact with the gods, but they weren't evil and didn't have blue skin! The differences between the different types of elves were in culture, knowledge, lifestyle, and magical power, not in physical attributes. Again, the imitation is something of a caricature.

Many other concepts can be traced to Tolkien, and many have totally new meanings or have been shorn of all meaning, while keeping their outward form. This is, of course, a tribute to the creative scope and force of Tolkien's work, but it is fascinating to see how the meanings of these stand-bys have changed while their outward forms have remained the same. Most of these changes work well enough, but I wish for a concerted return to abandoned dwarven cities rather than dungeons. These dungeons are boring and tedious, and I think the dwarven city concept provides a lot more scope for creativity.

Rhian Hunt
Port Wing, WI

Another One Bites the Rust

If I am current, the question of the month is "What's the cleverest trap you've ever encountered in a game?" Mine would be the iron oxide piñata.

My group loves roleplaying and has been playing the D&D game (in all its incarnations) since 1976. We also love Pink Floyd, and it so happens that their album *Animals* was getting a lot of play in my gameroom back in the 70s, so I was inspired by the floating pig on the cover of the album. "What a great piñata he would make," I thought. I know my group, and if I suspended a 50-foot stuffed pig from some sturdy chains, just low enough to be struck by my mighty adventurers, there would be no way of stopping them from trying to swat the porcine piñata to get whatever was inside.

True to form, Pascal the Mighty, Slayer of Undead, struts up to the pig, grabs his *frostbrand* and takes a mighty swing. It took a while to hack it down, plus a number of dice checks I made him roll (which befuddled him), but finally the contents of my pig spilled out and onto the ground. All were laughing hysterically to find that the "treasure" inside the suspended trap were three young rust monsters. All but Pascal, that is. His *frostbrand* is no longer part of his inventory.

Roger Cox
Spartanburg, SC

no. II SOLUTION

1 COMBINE
2 STATUE
3 BINDING
4 SEQUESTER
5 PRAYER
6 GLASSEE
7 FORESIGHT
8 FIREBALL
9 CANTRIP
10 REGENERATE
11 SENDING
12 DOMINATION
13 MISLEAD
14 ROPETRICK
15 TRUESEEING
16 RESTORATION

MIND BLAST

These are the only vowels in a recently published adventure product's name. What is the product?

_____A: _____ __A__ _____

You can find the solution to this *MIND BLAST* on page 14.

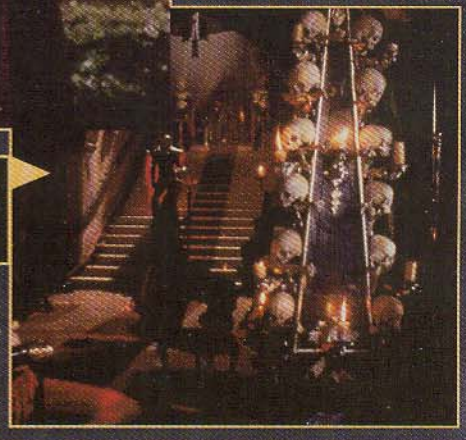
Sneak Preview

THE DUNGEONS & DRAGONS MOVIE

Empress Savina (Thora Birch, recently seen in *American Beauty*) prays for help from evil Profion.

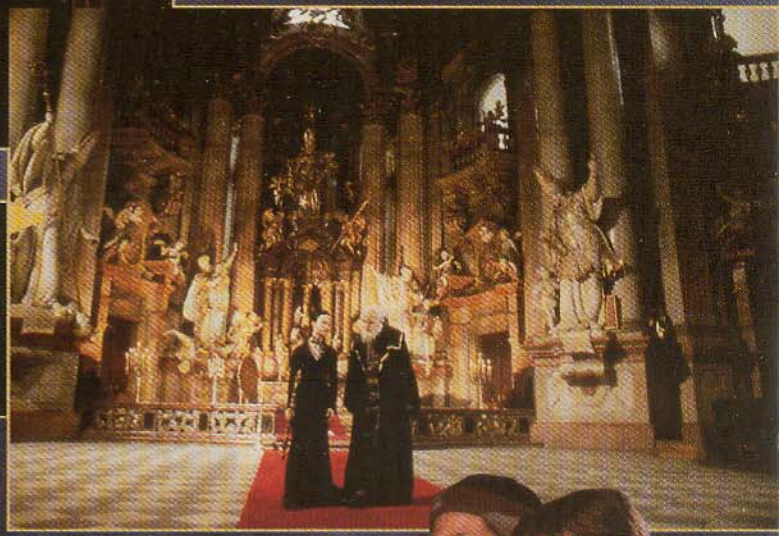
The long-awaited DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® movie is still at least six months away, but theatrical trailers should be available any week now. Next month, we'll bring you an interview with the film's director, Courtney ("Corey") Solomon. Until then, feast your eyes on these images from the film, provided courtesy of Sweetpea Entertainment.

Norda (Kristen Wilson), an elven tracker, uses magic to report back to her patron.



"Step aside, Darth Vader," says director Corey Solomon, who compares Bruce Payne's performance as Damodar to "what Jack Nicholson does with the Joker."

Pulling Damodar's strings is the wizard Profion, played by Jeremy Irons. "Jeremy brings a whole different performance to [the role]," says Corey, "because he's just a great actor."



Empress Savina (Thora Birch) and Vildan (Edward Jewesbury) in one of the fantastic real-world locations in Prague. Location shooting allowed the filmmakers to concentrate more of the budget on quality special effects.

Elwood (Lee Arenberg), Snails (Marlon Wayans), and Ridley (Justin Whalin) form the movie's "adventuring party." A twenty-year veteran of roleplaying, Corey says an ensemble was crucial because, "when you play D&D, it's all about the characters."

Steve Miller

by Stephen Kenson

Steve Miller sort of got into the gaming industry on a dare, but he always wanted to be a writer. "Actually, when I was in first grade, I wanted to be a sheriff's deputy," he says. "Then I wrote a little book in first grade called 'The Man Who Watches' about a sheriff's deputy, and I won some sort of prize for it. From then on, I wanted to be a writer."

After graduating from the University of Utah with a degree in English and Creative Writing, Steve worked as a publicist for a television station while freelancing as a feature writer and entertainment critic for various weekly newspapers and magazines. After attempts to break into the comic book industry fizzled, Steve found he needed a change. While talking it over with his gaming group, one of his fellow players picked up a rulebook and said, "You know, people get paid for writing this stuff. Why don't you try it?"

The very next day, Steve was on the phone to Bruce Heard, then Product Manager of his favorite TSR game world: the Known World, the MYSTARA® setting. Bruce, who also handled the scheduling of TSR's freelancers at the time, set Steve up with editing and design tests. A few months later, Steve had his first freelance assignment.

Unfortunately, Steve never got an opportunity to work on his beloved MYSTARA setting, because TSR cancelled the line shortly after he began freelancing for them. Steve still fondly recalls his experiences with the D&D® game. "I actually got about three years of campaign play out of the *Saga of the Shadow Lord* and *Master of the Desert Nomads* series," he says. The only published MYSTARA material Steve wrote was a parody article for an April issue of *DRAGON® Magazine*, a story "about Bargle [a Mystaran wizard] making collectable sets of magic items."

Is this the face of the grumpiest designer in gaming?

Alignment?
Neutral good. I get really annoyed when people try to push me or other people around, and I'm not quite bright enough to keep my mouth shut.

One word to describe yourself?
Disorganized.

Favorite TV show?
Law & Order.

Favorite book?
Solomon Kane by Robert E. Howard (part of the Baen Howard Library).

Favorite 3E character class?
Rogue. I've always played an elf fighter/thief, and one of my fears was that I couldn't play him in 3E—but the new game makes him cooler than ever.

Favorite cartoon character?
Cat Girl Nuku Nuku. Or Krazy Kat.

Game violence, threat or menace?
Media hype.

What game do you wish someone would make?
I would like to see someone do a good pirate game.

If you could have one superpower ...?
The ability to walk through walls, so when I lock myself out of my apartment, I can get back in easily.

Favorite STAR WARS line?
"Apology accepted, Captain Needa."

Who would play you in a movie?
Norm McDonald from *Saturday Night Live*. If not him, then Terrance Stamp.

After a few months of freelancing, Steve got a call from Tim Brown, who offered him a job on staff in response to a letter of thanks Steve had written him after cornering him for writing tips at the GEN CON® Game Fair. "I'd said in the letter, 'if you have any openings, please keep me in mind,' not really thinking anything would come of it." Steve accepted the job so fast he had to call Tim back afterward to ask about things like whether or not he would get health insurance and the like!

Since then, Steve has primarily worked on the RAVENLOFT® and DRAGONLANCE® lines in his time with TSR and later with Wizards of the Coast. Along the way, he maintained his interest in the D&D game, as opposed to the AD&D® system, which Steve says he never played much and didn't really enjoy. "I never played AD&D 1st Edition," he says, "and I didn't really like 2nd Edition, either. I was happy to stick with the D&D game."

Steve also contributed to the SAGA® game system for the DRAGONLANCE®: FIFTH AGE® and MARVEL SUPER HEROES® Adventure Game. Before coming to TSR, he even designed his own roleplaying system, called NUELOW, something of a parody of RPGs.

Fortunately, with 3rd Edition D&D, Steve found the D&D he'd always wanted, with the kind of features that appealed to him as a gamer. "I love the flexibility of 3rd Edition," he says. "I'm on record saying I didn't care much for earlier editions of the AD&D game. I felt like it was more about telling you what you couldn't do rather than what you

What's wrong with AD&D, and why the Evil Empire isn't so bad.

could do. If you're an elf, you can't be a paladin; if you're human, you can't be multiclassed; and so forth. Third edition has thrown all the 'can'ts' out the window, and it's now a game about possibilities."

What changed his mind? "I have a preference for simple game systems, and I like 3rd Edition because it opens up all these new possibilities. It's all about flexibility and character design. I can create any character I can imagine. In earlier editions, I often had to bend the AD&D rules to do that."

Now Steve divides his time between working on new D&D products and Wizards' new line of STAR WARS role-playing products. With co-designer Bruce Cordell, he wrote *Die, Vecna, Die!*, an epic adventure that spans the GREYHAWK®, RAVENLOFT, and PLANESCAPE® settings and has the potential to be "worlds-shattering."

Steve also co-wrote the first 3rd Edition FORGOTTEN REALMS® adventure with Sean Reynolds. Entitled *Into the Dragon's Lair*, the adventure follows the events of Ed Greenwood and Troy Denning's novel *Death of a Dragon*.

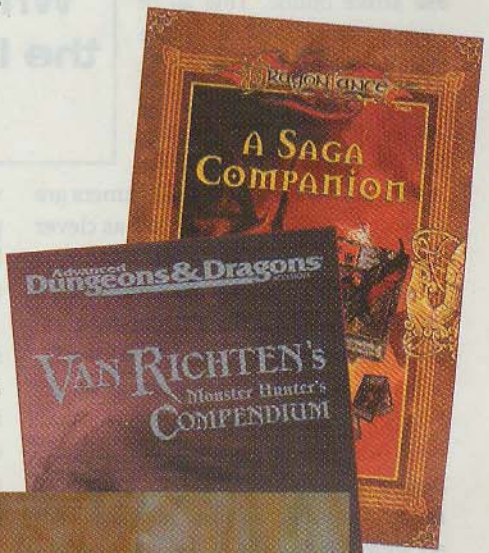
Between stints at TSR and Wizards of the Coast, Steve worked for West End Games editing the *STAR WARS Adventure Journal*, so he's delighted that Wizards will be producing a new STAR WARS game this year. "I think this is a line STAR WARS fans will be excited about," he says. "I'm a huge STAR WARS fan, which is why it's such a pleasure to work on STAR WARS again. We're working hand in hand with Lucasfilm, so you'll get all sorts of detail on stuff along with lots of new material."

Other projects in Steve's future might include some fiction. "I would love to do more fiction. To be honest, I think I'm a better storyteller than a game designer, and there are people around the office who agree with that statement!" he says with a laugh. "I am constantly looking for opportunities to do more fiction. I'm doing short pieces on the FORGOTTEN REALMS website" (at **http://www.wizards.com/ForgottenRealms/FR_Features.asp**).

What about Steve Miller's dream project? "It's a tie. Either a tremendously huge RAVENLOFT book that puts every domain and dark lord between two covers, or the definitive sourcebook to Ansalon, the heart of the DRAGONLANCE world. It's been over ten years now, and I still want to know who rules Solamnia!"

When pressed, Steve admits that it's actually a three-way tie, since the other book Steve would love to write is one he began for West End Games, the *Imperial Player's Guide*, a book on how to run a STAR WARS game with the characters as agents of the Empire! "My personal STAR WARS campaign has been running over three years now," Steve says, "and it started out with all the characters in the Imperial Navy, so I have a lot of material about not-so-bad Imperial characters and things they can do.

"Even evil empires aren't all bad!"



Selected Credits

DRAGONLANCE: Citadel of Light
DRAGONLANCE: Heroes of Defiance
DRAGONLANCE Reader's Companion: Odyssey of Gilthanas (with Doug Niles and Stan!)
GREYHAWK: Doomgrinder
RAVENLOFT: Carnival (with John Mangrum)
RAVENLOFT: Domains of Dread (with William W. Connors)
RAVENLOFT: The Evil Eye (with Steve Kurtz)
BIRTHRIGHT®: Player's Guide to Tuarheivel (with Duane Maxwell)
AD&D: Shaman (with Kevin Hassall)
AD&D: Van Richten's Monster Hunter's Compendium III (with David Wise and Teeuwynn Woodruff)
AD&D: Die, Vecna, Die! (with Bruce Cordell)

Maybe Even Dull Witted

By Gary Gygax

Likely because so many gamers don't embrace the vogue and trendy, a substantial and vocal segment of the industry asserts that you are average of intellect. They imply that those who are furthest from their brand of gaming are, most probably, dull witted. Regardless of the intelligence you actually possess, this same bunch scorn your social skills and are critical of your personal hygiene.

They are not legion, but they are vocal. Their followers are active online. This is, of course, about the only place anyone will pay attention to them. In the marketplace, the games they produce or play don't sell too well: Thus, the certain knowledge that most gamers are not bright, I suspect. Were you as clever at they, as keen of wit, you would be buying their creations. So they point a finger and say, "Not bright, not imaginative, untalented, and generally a loser."

That makes me mad—angry, even.

It is in vogue among this clique and their hangers-on to scorn the "pitiful" mass of gamers who have not embraced the truth of their form of gaming. That all were likely once of the same stamp means nothing. They have risen above the rest. Who can challenge their intellect? None, for have they not achieved the status of "professional"?

In the course of some forty years of involvement in hobby gaming, I have met thousands of players. I have spoken to thousands during conventions. From old to young, the persons I met tended to be above average in intelligence. This is reinforced by the thousands of gamers with whom I have communicated by email. Still, despite the time and the numbers involved, that is empirical evidence. How does one prove that the IQ of the gamer is above the norm?

Well, as you play the D&D® game, that's pretty easy. Take a look at the books involved; assess the reading level needed to comprehend them and the intellect needed to understand the mechanics of play. Without a doubt, the entry bar for this is at least average intelligence, an IQ of 100. If the lowest IQ for entry into the game is that, then it follows logically that the body of D&D game participants has an IQ that is at the very least above 100, the average for all persons. The game form selects out those below average and, I am certain, attracts those above average.

Who the hell cares what the level of social skills is among gamers?

Furthermore, the nature of the game seems to attract and encourage creativity as well. Thus, from my experience and from logical deduction, the gamer is not only above average in intelligence but also pretty inventive and prone to be creative. As for social skills, here we come to a horse of a different color.

Reasoning comes into play here. If a gamer has been gaming actively for any considerable length of time, that one has at least such social skills as to enable survival and interaction with the game group. Beyond that there is no available means of determining whether the typical gamer individual is polished and gregarious in dealings with society at large, or crude and introverted. But the important matter is actually this: Who the hell cares what the level of social skills is among gamers? It doesn't matter a hoot, does it?

That you, Gentle Reader, are or are not of a superior stamp isn't important to anyone but you anyway. I believe that you are, and I write in such manner as to reflect this belief. If, as some imply, you are average, a dullard perhaps, then I am one with you.

In point of fact, those who assail your intellect and jape at you through pejorative and rude comments about appearance, hygiene, manners, and so forth are jealous. They long for your approval and seek your custom, and you have rejected them by generally ignoring their creative stock in trade. In reaction, they damn you as lessers. Rather than being filled with a sense of camaraderie, they seethe with envy, suffer from a deep sense of rejection and inferiority, so they would belittle you to become giants in their own eyes. When you consider the matter in such light, what other emotion than pity can be expressed?

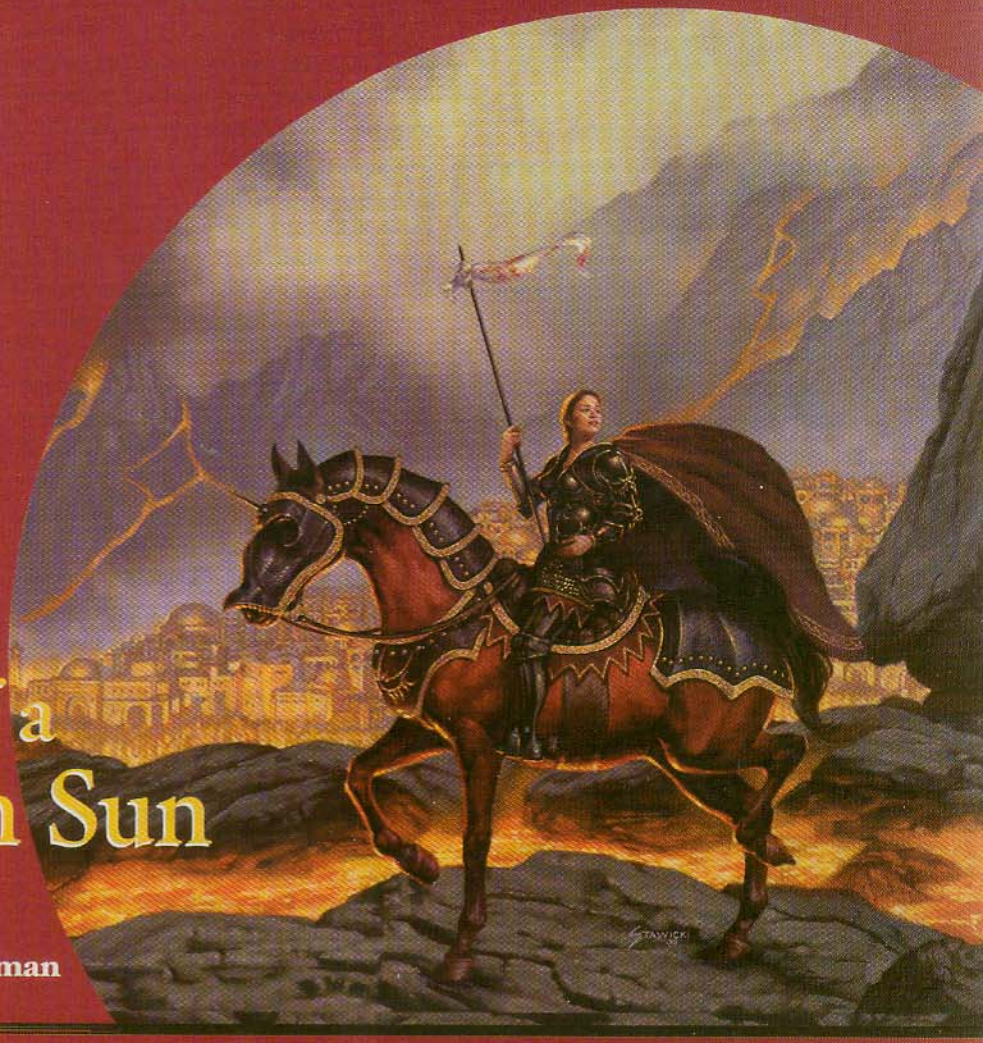
This segment of destructive gamers would destroy what you love in the name of "real roleplaying," and you are a stupid, unwashed geek if you don't agree with what they profess. Keep that in mind, for the troublesome clique of vociferous assailants isn't about to go away. Considering the nature of gamers, that follows. They too are above-average, imaginative, and creative folk. Their problem is that they lack perspective and wisdom.

With that said, I think it high time we return again to the "little people" of gaming, the "munchkins," and with them the much-maligned "dungeon crawl." Be here next issue for the fun.

Rethink Krynn.

Put aside everything you ever thought you knew about the Dragonlance® saga. The appearance of a strange, mystic young woman will forever change the destiny of Krynn.

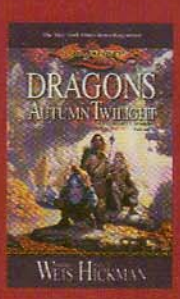
From the powerful collective imagination of bestselling authors Margaret Weis and Tracy Hickman comes *Dragons of a Fallen Sun,* their startling sequel to *Dragons of Summer Flame*. The first of The War of Souls trilogy, this book will do more than change your perception of Krynn. It will rock your world.

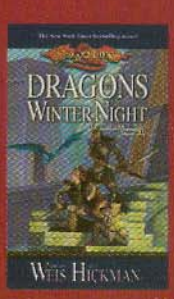


Dragons of a Fallen Sun

By *New York Times* bestselling authors
Margaret Weis & Tracy Hickman

Look for *Dragons of a Fallen Sun* and these new editions of the Chronicles trilogy at better book and hobby stores everywhere.





www.wizards.com

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Monks and Multiclassing

Immunity to disease? Check. Fall like a cat? Check. Resist mental attacks? Check. Stun your opponents? Check. Self healing? Check.

Quivering palm? You bet your booty!

Take everything groovy about the original monk, slap a d8 Hit Die on that bad boy, streamline the rules, and add a dash of poetry, and you've produced something very like the 3E monk.

Play a Monk ...

- For great class abilities each level
- For good saves in all three categories
- For two attack values: base and unarmed
- For good skill points
- For being dangerous even without any equipment

The Modern Monk

Fans of Hong Kong action movies can now play their own versions of Jet Li and Jackie Chan. The redesigned monk is no longer the fragile fist of earlier editions. Unlike fighters and rogues (previewed in the past two issues), monks don't rely so much on feats or skills—though their skill allotment is second only to the rogues, and many feats are practically swiped from the classic kung fu movies. Instead, the monk class shines because of its class abilities. Unlike any other class, the monk gains a special ability—and sometimes two—at every level from 1st to 20th.

Something Old and Something New

Fans of the original AD&D® game will recognize most of the 3rd Edition monk's class abilities, but not by name. See if you can match these poetic names with their classic effects. Better yet, write us a haiku with these phrases!

- Abundant Step
- Diamond Body
- Diamond Soul
- Empty Body
- Ki Strike
- Leap of the Clouds
- Perfect Self
- Purity of Body
- Quivering Palm
- Still Mind
- Timeless Body
- Tongue of the Sun and the Moon
- Wholeness of Body

Your Kung Fu is Strong

At 1st-level, monks gain three class abilities: Unarmed Strike, Stunning Attack, and Evasion. The latter is just like the rogue's ability of the same name, allowing the character to suffer no damage rather than half damage on a successful saving throw. The first two, however, are the meat and drink of monks.

First, Unarmed Strike means that monks don't invite attacks of opportunity when fighting unarmed. Without it, an unarmed character might eat steel before he can throw the first punch. Better yet, a monk can launch a flurry of blows, gaining an extra attack at the cost of a –2 penalty to hit on each attack. When fighting lightly-armored opponents, this is a great option.

Once per level per day, a monk can declare that an attack is meant to stun. On a successful hit, the opponent must make a successful Fortitude save or else be stunned for a round. When this works, any monk worth his giri follows through with a flurry of blows!

All of these abilities are just at first level! Afterward, monks gain a regular arsenal of physical and mystical abilities, including Deflect Arrows, Slow Fall, Improved Trip, and everyone's favorite: the dreaded Quivering Palm! Naturally, that's not all, and a monk perfects her mind as well as her body, eventually gaining spell resistance, immunity to disease and poison, the ability to speak with any creature, and even freedom from normal and magical aging.

All those abilities, and we're still leaving out some of the best ones! For the complete rules, you'll just have to wait for the new *Player's Handbook*. One thing's for sure: There'll be a lot more monks come August 2000.

There is one drawback to being a monk, and that's a restriction on multiclassing. Even so, multiclassing will be a much more popular—and better balanced—option with the 3rd Edition.

TO THIRD EDITION

11 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Jacks of All Trades

In the 3rd Edition game, any character can multiclass. Gone is the clunky concept of dual-classing for humans. There are still some restrictions, of course—paladins must be lawful, and barbarians must be nonlawful, so you won't see a lot of raging paladins. Also, while monks and paladins can multiclass, they can no longer advance as a monk or paladin once they do so. Beyond these limits, however, multiclassing is both easier and more attractive than ever before.

Basic Multiclassing

Let's say you have a 2nd-level rogue in the new D&D® game. When you gain enough experience for 3rd level, you can either advance as a rogue or add a new class at 1st level. Now you're a 3rd-level character: a 2nd-level thief and, say, a 1st-level wizard. At this point, you gain all of the benefits of being a 1st-level wizard, including hit points, spellcasting ability, and attack and save bonuses—the benefits of one class simply stack with those of the other(s), with only a few exceptions. You don't, for instance, multiply your skill points by four as you do when first creating a character.

When you gain enough experience to be a 4th-level character, you can advance as a rogue or as a wizard, or you can add a third class. If you're ambitious, maybe you take a level as a fighter. That's perfectly legal. So what's to keep you from eventually taking one of every class?

Why Multiclass?

- Begin the game as a rogue for a big boost in skill points and great skill access.
- Take a level as fighter to gain two feats and access to all martial weapons.
- Take a level as sorcerer to supplement your other class abilities with a few carefully chosen spells.
- Take a level as barbarian for rage and speed.

Why Not Multiclass?

- The best class abilities kick in at higher levels.
- Spellcasting ability is based on caster level, not character level.
- Fighters and wizards gain bonus feats faster.
- Paladins and monks must remain true to their chosen class to continue advancing.

Maintaining the Balance

As long as you keep your various classes within one level of each other—say you're a thief 2/wizard 1/fighter 1—there's no penalty for multiclassing. Once your classes become "uneven," however, you pay a –20% experience penalty for each class that's "out of balance" with your highest level class. For instance, a level 3/1/1 character would pay a whopping –40% penalty to all earned experience until she raised her 1st-level classes to 2nd level.

Of course, there's an exception.

Favored Classes

Each race has one or more "favored classes." These are classes that don't invoke the –20% multiclassing penalty when out of balance. A 10th-level dwarven fighter doesn't invoke a penalty when taking a level in cleric, since he can ignore the fighter level for purposes of multiclass penalties.

Theoretically, you could have a character with many classes and not pay an XP penalty so long as you kept them all within one level of each other. Of course, by the time your elven fighter/wizard/rogue/cleric reaches 5th level in all classes, your single-classed monk buddy will be a magical being with 20 levels worth of class abilities. While it's easier than ever to multiclass, there's still a benefit for the single-classed character.

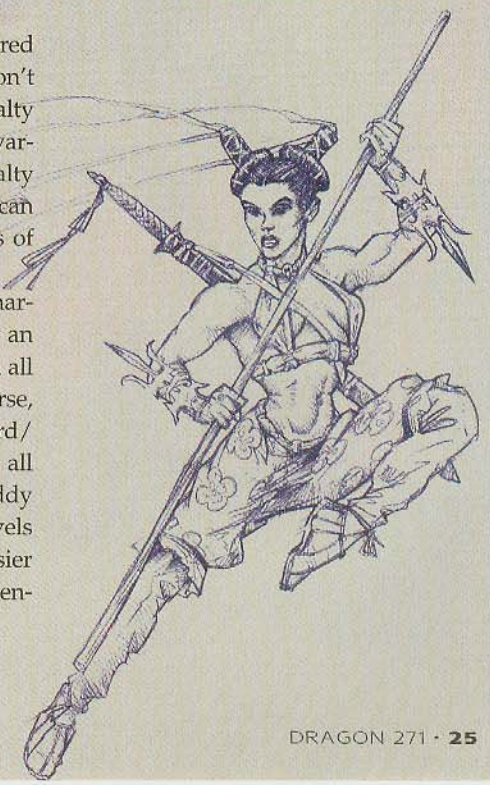
Favorited Multiclasses

When choosing a multiclass option for your character, keep in mind that certain classes don't invoke the –20% penalty for being "out of balance." One of the benefits of being human or half-elven is that you have more freedom to choose.

Race	Favored Multiclass
Dwarves	Fighter
Elves	Wizard
Gnomes	Illusionist
Half-Elves	Any
Half-Orcs	Barbarian
Halflings	Rogue
Humans	Any

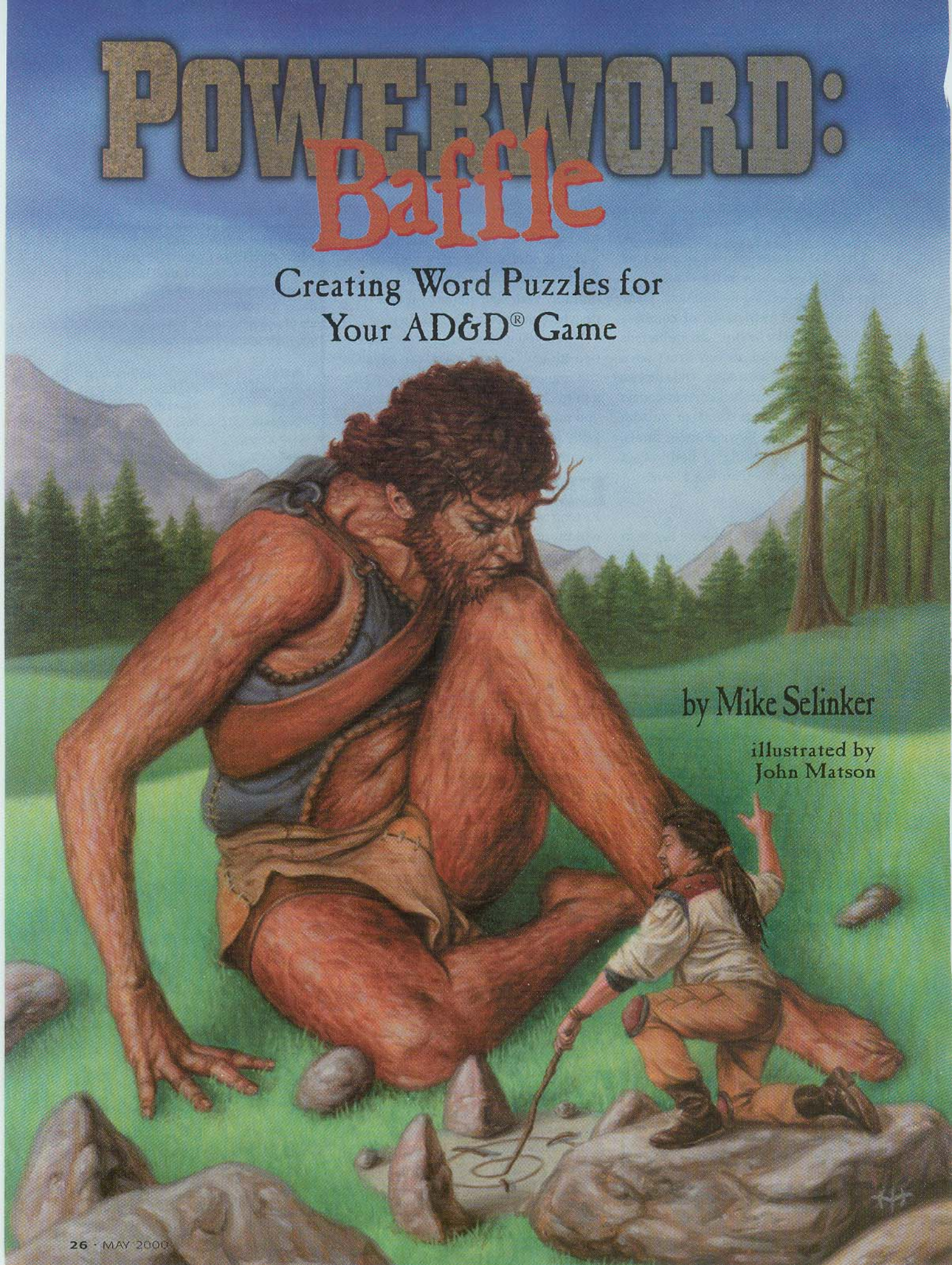
The new multiclassing rules are all about giving players the ability to create exactly the characters they imagine without complicating matters by dividing hit points, restricting class benefits, or keeping track of two separate experience-point totals. We'll go so far as to predict that most players will give their characters at least one level in another class after 3rd Edition arrives.

Join us next month, when we'll take a look at the wilderness warriors of 3rd Edition: the barbarian and the ranger.



POWERWORD: Baffle

Creating Word Puzzles for Your AD&D® Game



by Mike Selinker

illustrated by John Matson

Your PCs turn the corner, right into the ambush you've spent weeks choreographing. The derro leap from the shadows, shout a cry of triumph, and are greeted with a chorus of yawns. "Whoop-de-do," the party leader says. "Another ambush."

You've got two way to deal with this rebellion. First, you can transform the derro into tarrasques and see how challenging the encounter becomes then.

A second and more interesting choice is to challenge the players in a different way. When they see that the derro come armed not with swords but with puzzles, your players might take notice—especially if solving the puzzles is the only way they can complete their quest.

Choosing a Puzzle

When you solve a crossword or word search, you're solving the puzzle for the puzzle itself. There's no story, no character, and no reason to do the puzzle other than the challenge. When you bring a puzzle into a roleplaying game, however, you have an even better reason: It thrusts your players' mental skills into their characters' chances for success.

You know what this is like. Your players have been aching to break into the evil archmage's tower and give him what-for, but first they have to solve the riddle on the tower door. So they stop and think for a while, and so, presumably, do their characters. Even better, they're solving among friends, so what normally is a solitary activity becomes a shared experience.

You can't use just any puzzle, naturally. It might be fun for you to solve a puzzle about automobiles, but your average Paladin could stare at that for hours without thinking of one right answer. Your puzzle must cater to the characters as much as the players, and that's where the hard work comes in.

Personalize your puzzles. Build them around your PCs and the worlds they inhabit. Make references to the PCs, important NPCs, places in the game, even spells and magical items the PCs come across. Give as much thought to the puzzlemaker as the puzzle—after all, the puzzles your players solve must come from somewhere in your game world. Creating an archenemy who talks in riddles or a dragon who locks his treasures deep within mazes are ways of personalizing your puzzles. Imprison allies who send messages encrypted in codes, and draw your players into creating codes to send back to their friends. This way, you make your puzzles more than common AD&D® game obstacles. They become challenges your players are happy to see.

Bringing the Puzzle to Your Game

You can select one puzzle type or combine two or more. A crossword can involve word games, and a maze can have riddles that lead the PCs to secret doors. For a truly maddening puzzle, a word search can be encoded in cryptogram form. Play around with the puzzle forms until you discover the ones you'd enjoy solving most.

If you can, playtest the puzzles with someone outside your gaming group first. You don't want to go into your game grinning and come out crestfallen because you dropped an "E" from your scrambled word. If you can't playtest the puzzle before your game, at least pretend to solve it yourself. That way, you should notice any errors.

When the moment of truth arrives, give as much fanfare to the debut of a puzzle as you would to any monster or character. Maybe an archmage skywrites the riddle in the air above the battlefield. Perhaps the puzzle comes in the form of a jigsaw puzzle, and the players must find all the pieces. Maybe it's delivered by a messenger—who abruptly dies from the contact poison on the puzzle.

As the players solve the puzzles, don't be afraid to drop hints, preferably ones you've prepared in advance. At first, your players probably won't want help, but as time wears on they might grow frustrated. That's a good time for the players to turn to some close allies—their own PCs. As the players reach a point of frustration, you can have them make Intelligence checks for their PCs to gain hints.

A good hint nudges the solver in the right direction without giving the answer away. If the answer to your riddle is "a scroll," don't give a hint that says "a parchment with spells on it." Instead, the hint is better cast as a simpler riddle, such as, "While I am rolled, I contain great power, but unfurled my power can be freed."

When the players solve the puzzle, have some immediate reward ready: a secret door opens, a mage gives them potions, a key materializes out of thin air. That way, not only do the players feel a sense of creative accomplishment, they gain rewards as surely as if they'd used their time to clobber monsters.

The Question of Language

Do your PCs speak English? Most of the time, it doesn't matter. The instant you introduce a word puzzle, however, you must deal with the language barrier.

One solution is to ignore the issue. When your players are solving one of your puzzles, the PCs are too—but not necessarily the same puzzle. The puzzle is a simulation of what the PCs experience, much like AD&D combat.

Another solution is just to accept that the common tongue is English. Sure, the PCs don't know the words "modem" and "infotainment," but they have a pretty good subset of your knowledge to work from.

Designing Riddles

Riddles force the solvers to think in ways they've never thought before. Consider the sphinx's classic riddle, "What walks on four legs in the morning, two legs at noon, and three legs in the evening?" This stumped so many doomed souls not because its answer is obscure—what could be more common than "man"?—but because the clever sphinx puts the solver in mind of something much less common. In fact, if the sphinx's riddle weren't so well known, it'd make an excellent riddle in almost any AD&D game.

To make your own riddles, think about what your PCs know. They know which direction the sun and moon(s) rise, who rules their kingdoms, and a heck of a lot more than we know about fighting live monsters. They don't know about vacuum cleaners or how gravity works, and they don't have the slightest idea who Sarah Michelle Gellar is. So work within their knowledge base, and you'll be fine.

Of course, you might have to work at it. Peruse any book of medieval riddles, and you'll find that pretty much all of them have one of three answers: "time," "fire," or "flax." And hard as it might be to believe, people just don't groove on flax riddles these days.

Some riddles test the solvers' knowledge of trivia, and in your players' case, the subject might be AD&D trivia. Try not to ask an obscure question that has an obscure answer; no one cares who the barmaid at Waterdeep's Thirsty Sailor is. But you can use an obscure question with a very common answer, such as this one:

What two magical liquids might allow a man to wield a weapon he could not even hold in his hands before? The answer to this and all following puzzles appear on page 35.

That riddle revolves around specialized knowledge, but most riddles center on cleverness. Such a riddle has a setup and a punchline. The punchline makes the players laugh and slap their foreheads, but it's the setup that does all the hard work. The setup should give all necessary information while working to obscure every bit of it. Watch this riddle at work:

Sir Morgan was the greatest horseman in the kingdom. In every tilt in every tournament, not once was he knocked off his horse. So noble was he that his mount received accolades as high as those of Sir Morgan himself. But when the queen gave Sir Morgan her laurel, he would not dismount as was the custom. Why not?

After you've thought about it for a few seconds, think on this: What does the word "horseman" put in your mind?

Another fun thing to do with riddles is to bring in poetry and wordplay. Rebuses, initials, homophones, and homographs (see the section on "Designing Word Games") are especially conducive to riddles. Try this one:

My first can charge with fury.
My second serves the knight.
When one pursues the other,
It's the frenzy that's in sight.

Riddle Checklist

- ❑ Decide on your punchline.
- ❑ Craft your setup.
- ❑ Use wordplay and other writing tricks to obscure the answer.

Designing Cryptograms

A cryptogram is a substitution code. The simplest kind is one in which each letter is substituted for another, so that A might equal B. Cryptograms are good when you want to give the players a message but you want them to puzzle over it—perhaps as the orc army bears down upon their position.

When you make a code like this, start with a meaningful message (for example, "The treasure is under the tapestry."). The longer your message, the easier the decoding will be—but the longer it will take to decode the entire message.

Next, write down the letters of the alphabet in order. Now you have to assign different letters to each letter in the alphabet. When you reach this point, decide whether to make the cryptogram easy, hard, or ultra-hard.

An easy cryptogram uses a substitution that the players can grasp quickly. A classic code is to advance the letters forward one letter in the alphabet (A=B, B=C, and so on until Z=A). Another classic is to reverse the alphabet (Z=A, Y=B, and so on). Players will see this coming, so this is a good option if you want a quick puzzle.

A hard cryptogram is the normal variety, where the letters of the alphabet are assigned randomly (A=Q, B=F, C=S, and so on). Make sure you don't double-assign a letter; a good way to do this is to write the substituted alphabet out in its new alphabetical order. Of course, you don't have to use letters of the alphabet as your code; runes or symbols of different gods, for example, might work quite well.

An ultra-hard cryptogram messes with either the layout of the message or the one-to-one substitution of the letters. You can alter the layout of the message by running the words together, running the words backward, or even putting each word on a different piece of paper. You can even double-assign letters (such as making Y stand for both E and M), or convert two or three letters of the alphabet to one of the ten digits. So when a player figures out that 7 equals either A, M, or X, she will spend a lot of time working out the quote.

Breaking most codes takes pure brute force, with players looking for common letters like E and S. Repeated words are helpful, and words like "a" and "the" show up often. Watch especially for double letters and—these are dead giveaways—letters after apostrophes. (In the world of characters like Drizzt Do'Urden, however, maybe they're not so obvious after all.)

Here's a code that you can solve. Start by looking for common letters, duplicated letters, and other cues. (The apostrophe is really an apostrophe.)

The king has been magically spirited away in the night. Scrawled in the mosaic tile on the king's royal dressing room floor is the "message" in ***Figure 1.***

Figure 1

(By the way, wouldn't it be cool if the way you got to the object mentioned in the code was to follow the arrows through a twisty maze? Sometimes a puzzle can serve two masters.)

Cryptogram Checklist

- ❑ Craft your message.
- ❑ Write down the alphabet in order.
- ❑ Assign a different code letter to each letter of the alphabet.
- ❑ Write the coded letters above the letters in your message.
- ❑ Double-check the letter assignments.

Designing Word Searches

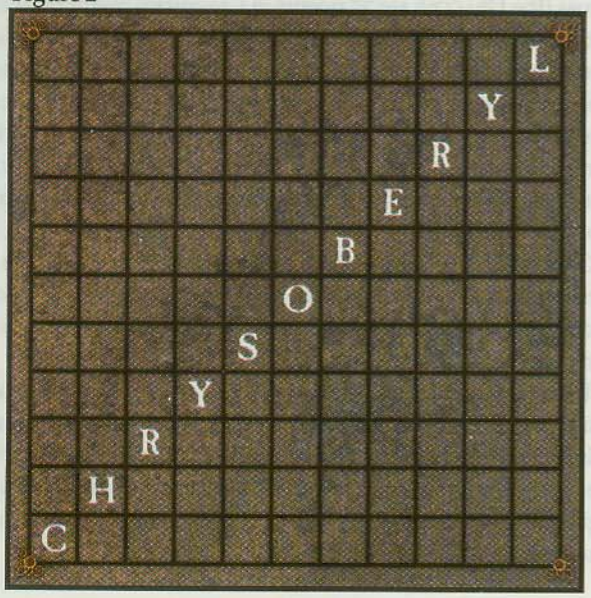
Word searches—puzzles containing words vertically, horizontally, and diagonally—have a reputation for being very easy, and most deserve it. But you can play around with conventions of word searches and really perplex your players.

First, you need an idea of what you want to hide, such as the names of monsters or important NPCs. Here, a puzzle about gems will serve as an example.

Once you've figured out what you want to hide, write down a list of words and short phrases that relate to your subject. Generally, you want to limit the length of the words in your list to twelve letters or fewer, because it's pretty easy to find a twenty-letter phrase in a word search. You're going to need at least a dozen words; some big word searches contain fifty or more words. You might not use all the words, but its better to have too many than too few. For the gem puzzle, the list of precious stones might be this: *agate, amber, amethyst, cat's-eye, chrysoberyl, coral, diamond, emerald, garnet, jade, jet, moonstone, onyx, opal, pearl, quartz, ruby, sapphire,* and *topaz.*

Once you have your list, get out some graph paper and get ready to put your words in the grid. In the center of the graph paper, put one of your longest words running in a straight line in some direction. (Words are easy to find if they run down or to the right, moderately hard to find if they run up or to the left, and hard to find if they run diagonally.) This long word is your anchor word. In the gem search, the anchor word could be chrysoberyl.

Figure 2



Sources for Fantasy Puzzles

Most of the best AD&D game puzzles come, from published adventures, like 1998's *The Crypt of Lyzandred the Mad,* by Sean Reynolds. With only the barest plot, Sean provides dozens of puzzle-based encounters for any AD&D game. All the puzzles are language-neutral—a nice touch.

If you're willing to dig, another great puzzle find is 1983's *Maze of the Riddling Minotaur,* by Jeff Grubb. Using "magic pen" technology to hide the answers, Jeff scatters many short riddles through the module. The only problem is that most of the magic pens dried up a decade ago. (A little lemon juice might do the trick.)

Outside the AD&D world, many books give great puzzles for fantasy games.

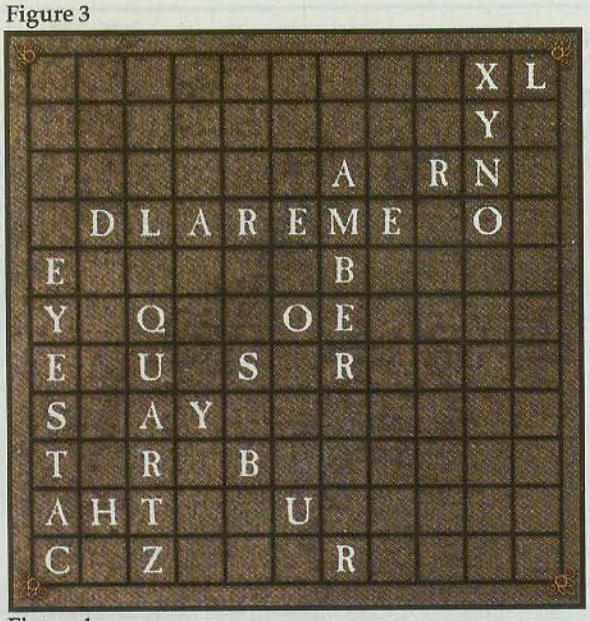
- Muriel Mandell's *Fantastic Book of Logic Puzzles* (Sterling Publishing) is all about dragons and wizards.
- Barbara Seuling's *Monster Puzzles* and *Monster Madness* books (Xerox Education Publications) focus on ghost- and vampire-based puzzles.
- Susannah Leigh's *Puzzle Dungeon* (Usborne Young Puzzle Books) is what it sounds like: a puzzle dungeon for kids.
- *Riddle Rooms #1* and #2 (Cloud Kingdom) are game-based sourcebooks that provide cunning puzzles that can be used in any game.
- Robert Abbott's *Mad Mazes* (Bob Adams Publishers) contains highly unique mazes based on gods, minotaurs, and pirates.
- Larry Evans's *Gorey Games* (Troubador Press) gives somewhat gruesome puzzles based on the macabre work of Edward Gorey.
- Most puzzle books by Martin Gardner, such as *Perplexing Puzzles and Tantalizing Teasers* (Dover Publications), use fantasy material in their puzzles.
- Edward Wakeling's *Alice in Wonderland Puzzle and Game Book* (United States Games Systems) unites the story with puzzles and a deck of Alice cards.
- Christopher Manson's *Maze* (Henry Holt) is a fantasy dungeon maze that runs throughout the book, and one of the most impressive puzzles ever published.
- Lego has released a series of puzzle books such as *Castle Mystery* and *Curse of the Mummy.* (Lego Books).

Start crossing some of the letters of your anchor word with other words. In **Figure 2**, chrysoberyl is crossed by six words from the list. Note how both emerald and amber not only cross chrysoberyl, but each other. That's how a good word search uses its letters economically. **See Figure 3.**

Now fill the grid with other words from the list, starting with the longest words. Don't be afraid to move words. Try to balance words going in each of the eight directions, especially diagonally. Here, the gem puzzle contains all but one of the words from the list, plus two more theme words. **See Figure 4.**

Once you've put in as many words as you want, make sure they're all still there. When you've got the words in place, fill in the empty squares. The simplest way to do this is to toss in random letters. But you can also put a message into the empty

Figure 3



									X	L
									Y	
						A		R	N	
	D	L	A	R	E	M	E		O	
E						B				
Y		Q			O	E				
E		U		S		R				
S		A	Y							
T		R		B						
A	H	T			U					
C		Z				R				

Figure 4

	J	A	C	I	N	T	H	L	X	L
P	E	R	I	D	O	T	R		Y	
E	R	I	H	P	P	A	S	R	N	E
	D	L	A	R	E	M	E	D	O	N
E		Z		P	C	B		N		O
Y		Q		E	O	E		O		T
E	L	U	T	S	R	R	D	M		S
S		A	Y		A			A		N
T	G	R	P	B	L			I	J	O
A	H	T		O	U			D	E	O
C		Z		G	A	R	N	E	T	M

Figure 5

T	J	A	C	I	N	T	H	L	X	L
P	E	R	I	D	O	T	R	H	Y	E
E	R	I	H	P	P	A	S	R	N	E
A	D	L	A	R	E	M	E	D	O	N
E	M	Z	E	P	C	B	T	N	H	O
Y	Y	Q	S	E	O	E	T	O	I	T
E	L	U	T	S	R	R	D	M	S	S
S	A	A	Y	G	A	E	M	A	O	N
T	G	R	P	B	L	F	S	I	J	O
A	H	T	E	O	U	E	I	D	E	O
C	N	Z	G	G	A	R	N	E	T	M

squares, usually reading left to right. The gem puzzle features 20 theme words and 25 blank squares, so all it needs is an apropos message for a puzzle about precious stones. **See figure 5.**

Now here's something that can be put into the lid of a chest full of gems. The message in the chest might read:

Here are inlaid twenty stones
But only one can you take home
Find the message buried deep
And name the one that you should keep

Since the solvers don't get the word list, it's a bit harder. They'll have to discover what's in the puzzle on their own. And just to make sure the PCs don't take the whole chest of gems, the chest will explode in a 20d6 *fireball* if the PCs are so presumptuous as to ignore how clever this puzzle is.

Word Search Checklist

- ❑ Choose a theme.
- ❑ Craft a word list related to the theme.
- ❑ Place an anchor word onto a sheet of graph paper.
- ❑ Cross the anchor word with a number of words from the list.
- ❑ Border and fill in the rest of the grid with words from the list.
- ❑ Double-check that all the words are still in the grid.
- ❑ Fill in the unassigned squares with random letters or a message.

Designing Quotation Puzzles

In roleplaying games, puzzles are often used to deliver messages into the hands of the player characters. Quotation puzzles fit that need exactly.

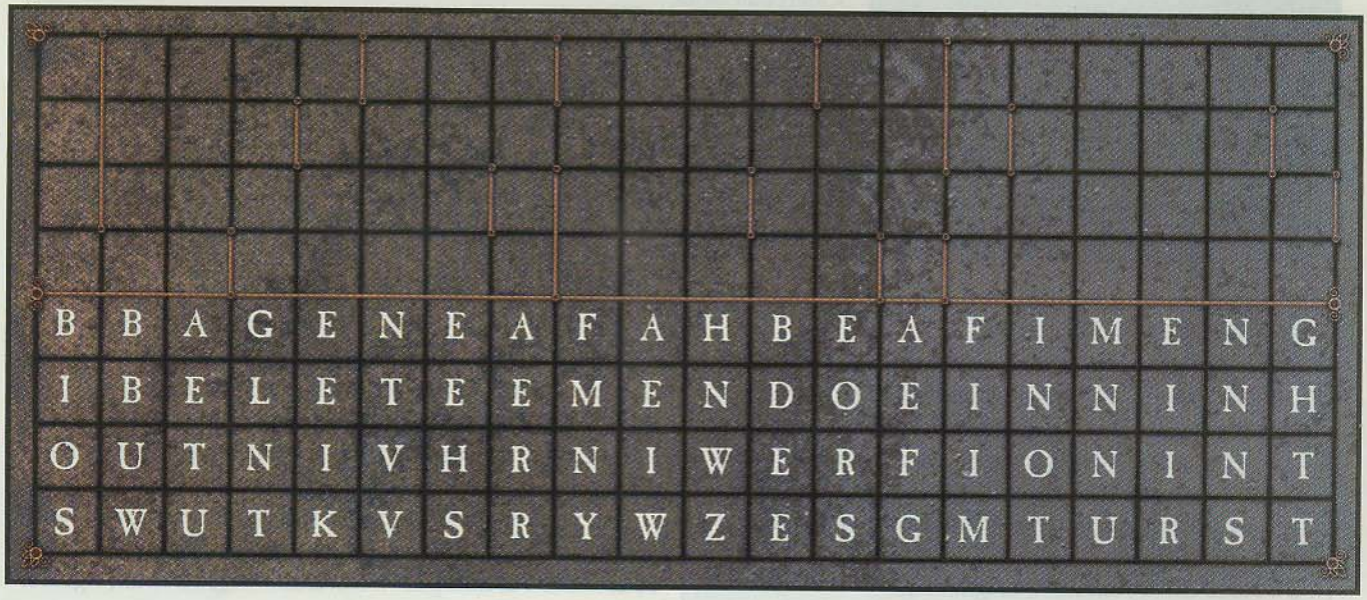
A simple quotation puzzle is the quote box. For a quote box, you lay out your message in a grid pattern. Then you take the letters from each column and alphabetize them, requiring the players to use word patterns and process of elimination to restore the quote to sensibility.

First, you need a message. It should be short, no more than one hundred letters or so. You can make up the message, or you can pull it from text that your PCs might conceivably come across (the DRAGONLANCE® poems in Chronicles might be okay, but probably not the *MONSTROUS MANUAL*™ book). You can introduce real-world quotes into your games, but only ones that make sense in the game world. As an example, a quote from a moody song by the New Age singer Enya might make perfect sense in an AD&D game, plus it's excellent for a puzzle dungeon. As long as the message makes sense in your game world, you can use it.

Once you've picked a quote, count the number of letters it contains. You can ignore spaces and punctuation, though you should count hyphens and apostrophes. Divide the total by 3 (very easy), 4, 5, or 6 (very hard).

Then take a piece of graph paper and count squares across equal to your new number, rounding up. Count squares down equal to the number you used to divide the total. Bounding this area gives you a space to place your quote. The Enya quote is eighty letters and contains no spaces, so it needs an area twenty squares across and four squares down.

Figure 6



Now, one letter per square, write the quote across. When you reach the end of a line, continue in the leftmost square of the next line. When you're done, if you have any blank squares at the bottom right, fill them in with black squares.

Below your quote, write down the letters in each column in alphabetical order. Then copy these letters onto a new sheet of graph paper and leave a blank area for solving. Mark the divisions between words with bars, even if they occur at the ends of lines. See the final grid for the Enya lyric in **Figure 6**.

Be sure to note any black squares. You can also do a quote box where black squares separate words. This airs out the puzzle, giving a variable number of letters in each column. You can construct these the same way as above, only you need to account for the black squares as letters when you're counting out the quotation.

To solve these puzzles, watch for one-letter words (usually A or I), repetitions of common words like "the" and "of," and key words to the subject matter of the quote. Also, a column with lots of the same letter (like the one second from the right) is easier to place than one with many different letters.

Quote Box Checklist

- ❑ Choose a quote.
- ❑ Count its letters.
- ❑ Divide by the depth of the quote box (usually 3, 4, 5, or 6) to get the width.
- ❑ Write the quote on a graph, starting a new line each time you reach the width.
- ❑ Block off the ends of words with bars.
- ❑ Write the letters of each column in alphabetical order below that column.
- ❑ Copy the alphabetical letters below a blank grid that rep resents the quote.
- ❑ Double-check the letter assignments.

A second and more complex type of quotation puzzle is the acrostic, where you take a quote of up to 180 letters and scramble these letters among smaller words.

Again, start with a message, using the same guidelines as for a quote box. The longer your message, the easier it will be for you to get a nice variety of words. Then, write down the message on a piece of graph paper, writing consecutive numbers above each letter (so your first letter is 1, your second is 2, and so on).

Now, start pulling out letters for shorter words that have nothing to do with your message. Try to make each word use letters from different places in the message. Your first couple of words will be easy to find, but then you might be left with a combination like BHHHKUZ at the end. So go back to earlier choices and break them up. If you get stuck, try to break up words that contain letters you don't have left, especially common ones like Es and As. Eventually, you'll end up with a series of words that you can clue for the solver. (If you want to get fancy, try to make words whose first letters spell out the name of your quote's source or a key NPC.)

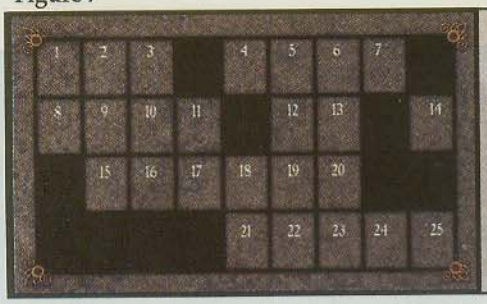
Write your finished word list out on the graph paper. Then assign one numbered letter to each letter in the word list. So if your quote's first letter is A and your first word is "gorilla," the last letter of that word can be assigned the number 1. Assign each letter only once, trying to spread the letters from each word in the quote among as many words from the list as possible. Check and double check your assignments.

Then write clues for each word in the list. Next to each clue, put blanks equal to the word's number of letters. Below each blank, put the corresponding number of the letter you assigned to that blank's letter. Do a blank grid with the numbers in it, and give the results to your doubtlessly impressed players.

For an example, here is a message that might well save the PCs' lives.

In a square room with exits on each wall, the PCs find a message on a scroll. See Figure 7.

Figure 7



Caterpillar fabric	13	22	4	15				
Murder, legally	2	10	23	12	25	16	8	5
Fruitful, like land	6	19	11	1	24	17	3	
Non-divine person	21	9	20	7	14	18		

Acrostic Checklist

- ❑ Choose your message.
- ❑ Write the message on graph paper, putting a number above each letter.
- ❑ Pull out some letters for new words, checking the boxes next to the numbers.
- ❑ Break up and reassign letters from previously chosen words until you have a full set of new words.
- ❑ Double-check your letter assignments.
- ❑ Create a blank grid with numbers in place of the quote's letters.
- ❑ Write clues for each new word.
- ❑ Next to the clues, put blanks for the new words and number each blank with the corresponding number from the quote.
- ❑ Double-check your number assignments.

Designing Crosswords

Crossword like the ones in the Sunday *New York Times* definitely fall into the don't-try-this-at-home category. Interlocking that many words is a lot of work—more work than you'll need to get your players puzzling. Besides, crosswords have weird conventions—no two-letter words, no uncrossed letters, symmetry along the diagonal axis, and so on—that you just don't need to follow. And worst of all, imagine those crosswords with only the knowledge base of a medieval fantasy knight. No pop music, no sports, no politics. It just ain't happening.

But don't fret. There are crossword types you can do that will befuddle your players without making you work too hard.

Let's say you want to give your players a clue about the one weapon that will slay the magical horror from beyond. A good way to go about this is to hide the answer in a criss cross, a puzzle where related words cross each other. To make one, you fit a list of words into a grid, and then ask your players to do the same thing. It should be a subject that allows for many short words, such as weapons and armor.

After you've got a list of possible words, get out the graph paper. Lay in a long word either across or down. Then cross it with a few other words. For example, the first crosses might look like Figure 8.

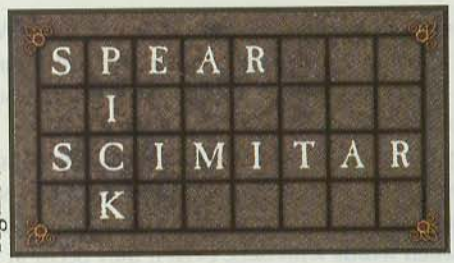


Figure 8

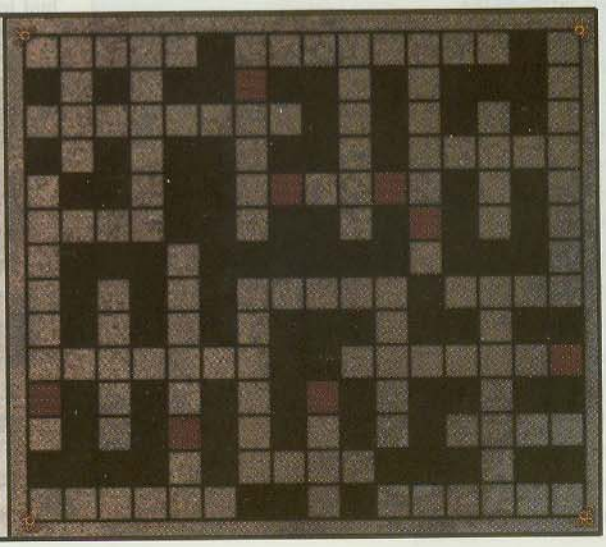
After placing your first words, continue adding words to the puzzle. Like in Scrabble, you can't put letters next to each other unless they form a word (and in this case, a word that's part of your word list). Once you've gotten the words crossing each other to your content, create a blank grid with black squares separating words. Finally, provide your players with a copy of the word list. See **Figure 9**.

Evil priests chant to open the gate that will release the ancient horror. It is too late to stop the summoning. Now, only solving a long-dead weaponsmith's puzzle will reveal the weapon needed to kill the beast.

The shaded squares spell out the puzzle's ultimate solution. Reading across, the players should see the one weapon their PCs need.

Figure 9

ARMORS	PICK
ARROWS	RANSEUR
AWL PIKE	SCIMITAR
AXES	SCOURGE
BARDICHE	SHIELD
BILL	SHORT BOW
FLAIL	SICKLE
FORK	SPEAR
GLAIVE	SPETUM
GUISARME	STAFF
JAVELIN	STONE
MACE	SWORD
MAIL	VOULGE
PARTISAN	WHIP



Criss cross Checklist

- ❑ Choose a theme for the criss cross.
- ❑ Craft a large word list related to the theme.
- ❑ Place a long word from the list on graph paper, and cross it with other words.
- ❑ Continue until you've placed as many words as you desire.
- ❑ Make sure no partials words were created in the process.
- ❑. Create a blank grid alongside the word list.
- ❑ If you want a hidden answer, shade the appropriate squares.

A criss cross can become a regular crossword just by adding clues. Instead of a word list, each word in the grid gets a numbered clue. The arms puzzle might become a weapon merchant's bill of goods, with the clues being not definitions but prices. So the clue for "short bow" would be "30 gold pieces," assuming the merchant was selling at *Player's Handbook* prices.

A word of caution, though: Converting a criss cross into a clued crossword runs the risk of baffling your players in an unintended way. An eight-letter word crossed by only two other words (see "partisan" above) makes for some tough solving if the clue is at all hard. Be careful, or your players might lynch you.

You can avoid this problem by designing a fully crossed crossword, but this takes quite a bit of practice. To start off, take a piece of graph paper and draw a 4×4 box. **See Figure 10.**

Figure 10

Try filling in words across and down. You'll probably have some difficulty the first few times, so here are a few tips.

- High-point letters in Scrabble are hard to use, like in the word "quiz."
- Use words that alternate vowels and consonants, like "animate." Clumps of consonants make your life hard; the word "strengths" is hard to place.
- Putting an "S" in the lower right corner never hurt anyone.
- The easiest vowels along the bottom row and rightmost columns are Es.

Once you've placed your words, you'll need clues. Your clues should be exact definitions of the words in the grid. A good clue for the word "orcs" might be "Piglike humanoids." However, "Eat halfling flesh" would be a bad clue, because it defines a verb (and an odd one at that), not the noun "orcs."

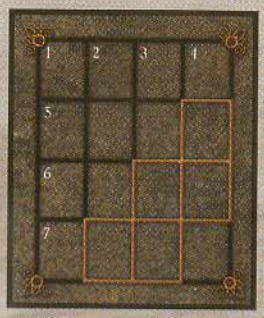
Punny clues are especially fun. "Monster with a fiery temper" might be a good clue for "salamander," for example. Sometimes putting a question mark after the clue will alert your solvers that a groaner is coming.

Partial entries often are fine as well, as long as they're not too long. For example, "Portable ___" is a fine clue for "hole" (a lot better than "Courtney Love's rock band" would be, since it's unsolvable by the characters).

You can increase the size of the grid as you try more crosswords, adding black squares to separate words. Until then, **Figure 11** provides a 4×4 crossword for your players.

A magical shield's power will come to life only if painted with a certain emblem. This puzzle on the inside of the shield identifies the emblem.

Figure 11



ACROSS

1. *Harp of charming* user
5. Love, poetically
6. Legendary Athasian gladiatrix
7. Understood

DOWN

1. Moneychanger, perhaps
2. Prayer closer
3. Live like a ranger
4. Use *Nolzur's marvelous pigments*

Crossword Checklist

- ❑ Draw a grid that you think you can fill.
- ❑ Place any black squares that you need to separate words.
- ❑ Place words going across and down, reshaping the grid as necessary.
- ❑ Double-check that all letters are crossed in both directions.
- ❑ Place numbers in a blank grid so that each across and down word has a number.
- ❑ Write clues in numerical order for the across and down words.
- ❑ Double-check your numbering and clue assignments.

Designing Word Games

Word games come in as many varieties as there are words to manipulate. They're usually come across by chance, or by analyzing list of related words for ones with wordplay possibiities. If you're looking at a list of weapons for ones which could scramble into other words, you'll find "lance" can become "clean," "spear" can become "pares," and "sling stone" can morph into "singletons."

Here are a dozen word game archetypes, each with an example puzzle.

Word Game Checklist

- ❑ Find a word, word list, or message you want to manipulate.
- ❑ Play around with several word game types until one works.
- ❑ Double-check your wordplay.
- ❑ Craft a clever method of delivering the wordplay puzzle.

Initials: A full set of words is given, but only one letter of each is needed. It can be the first, last, middle, or any other letter whose position you can indicate. So the Realms rogue Volo might sign his name Valuator Of Lost Objects, a bit of hyperbole that spells out his name in the capital letters.

A witch's magic potion recipe might consist of: Tail of aurumvorax, heart of troll, head of remorhaz, essence of kenku, and the dying breath of a ____.

Rebuses: Like in the old game show "Concentration," rebuses take short words and put them together to form a new word, such as "cut" and "lass" joining as "cutlass." Usually you'll want to clue each part and the whole word. Rebuses

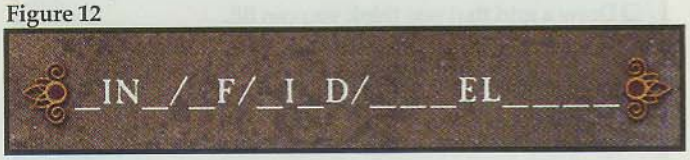
often are in pictographic form, so you might see a picture of a young girl bleeding from a small wound to get "cutlass"

Your PCs might hear a high-level mage intone: "I gather my components for a spell of eldritch power. The first part's a restriction; the last part is a flower."

Completions: A completion gives you only part of a word or phrase, and you must fill in the rest, such as "helmet" is seen in "eart**h elemen**tal." Usually this is done by giving part of the word filled in a series of blanks.

A rebellious soldier could impart the following statement: "When I deserted, they called me an 'infidel.' And for my punishment, they seized my only magical item. As you see, it is appropriate to my woeful state." (Figure 12)

Figure 12



Hidden Words: Sometimes the trickiest thing to do with words is hide them in plain sight. In the priest spell list alone, the word "lamest" is hidden in "flame strike," while "calves" is in "magical vestment." You can hide most words in messages, and you'd be surprised how long it takes to find them.

A wizened viking priest could ask the PCs to scan this oath and find as many Norse gods as they can: "Fall, O killer, and stab raging god incarnate, as if it were the Lord of Death Ordained that I'd unleashed in a mighty rage."

Anagrams: Scrambled words make some of the most delightful puzzles. Merely rearranging the letters in a message can give your players pause. But it's even better when the scrambled letters turn into something else meaningful. "Titaness," for example, can scramble into the word "instates." If you want help with your anagramming, mix up SCRABBLE tiles, pick up a Franklin word finder from Radio Shack, or download a shareware anagram program from the internet. (Some examples are *Anagrams 1.0*, *Ars Magna*, and *Karma Manager*.)

A downtrodden alchemist might present the PCs with a huge urn of ashes. She also has nine scraps of paper that she has spelled out to the word "cremation." She will gladly reward the PCs with a rare pegasus feather if they can tell her what the ashes were before they B ecame ashes.

Additions and Deletions: A letter can be added to or subtracted from a word to make an entirely different word. The letter can be added or subtracted at the front ("laughter" to "slaughter"), the back ("harp" to "harpy"), or anywhere in between ("strange" to "strangle"). You can add or delete multiple letters, like taking out the entire middle of the spell "blindness" to make another spell, "bless."

A dwarven weaponsmith holds out seven of his creations and tells the PCs that they may have all of these weapons of quality if they but tell him what the weapons have in common. The weapons are: a mace, a sword, a dart, a dirk, a whip, a spear, and a partisan. What unites these seven disparate implements of war?

Containers: Similar to additions, containers take one whole word and put it inside another to make a totally different word. For example, "rid" can go inside "tents" to make "tridents." Here's an example puzzle for you FORGOTTEN REALMS® fans.

A man who lies about everything tells your PCs, "I am thinking of a goddess whose name is a word meaning 'now' inside a word meaning 'foot.' Which goddess is it?"

Reversals: A reversal involves spelling a word backward. Good reversals involve making another word in the process, like "live" and "evil" (or "lived" and "devil"). Place and character names throughout AD&D products often are reversals of their authors' names, such as the archmages Zagyg and Drawmij. Similar to reversals are palindromes, words and phrases that read the same forward and backward (such as the archmage Boccob).

A connoisseur of magical weapons surveys his collection and smiles upon a locked chest. He says, "I have in this box a rare and wondrous weapon. It looks the same no matter how you look at it. It is only found deep underground, and even those who find them rarely bring them to the light of day. What is it?"

Homophones: Homophones are words that sound the same as each other, but look different, such as "knoll" and "gnoll." Puzzles that involve soundalike words typically should be read aloud or clued with pictures, for seeing them written out may give away the answers.

An innkeeper puzzles over a letter from his sister. She sends a recipe for a drink, and says the innkeeper needs only one more ingredient to make a tasty beverage. The innkeeper offers a week's room and board to anyone who can figure out what she means. Her "recipe" is shown in ***Figure 13.***

Homographs: Homographs are words that look the same as each other, but have very different meanings and etymologies. The words may be pronounced alike (like "troll," as in the monster and the action of fishermen) or differently (as in "wound," namely the injury and the past tense of the verb "wind"). Homographs are best written down, allowing the players to make their own incorrect assumptions about what is meant.

Figure 13

A mute sage's cobweb-covered scroll might feature the riddle, "Why are all vampires terrified of flowers?"

Metatheses: A metathesis is the switching of two letters in a word to make another. The letters can be adjacent to each other ("gore" to "ogre") or set apart from each other ("ragged" to "dagger").

A skeleton of an ancient king sits on a throne, clad in the robes and accoutrements of state. A magic mouth *intones, "On my frame is a symbol of my rulership. Transpose two letters in that object's name, and you will name the servant that protects me. Name it not, and the creature will attack with unabated fury." What is the object, and what protects the king's corpse?*

Letter Changes: Altering one or more letters can make one word into another. You can alter the first letter ("chief" to "thief"), the last letter ("bare" to "bard"), or any letter in between ("mace" to "mage").

Your PCs discover a dusty decanter that bears this message around its seal: "Thin battle hoods tee moot eighty lemon. Candle at wits cure." Should they open the decanter?

ANSWERS

Riddles: The answers to the magical liquids question are the potion of *giant strength*, which allows the throwing of massive boulders, and the *oil of disenchantment*, which can make a recalcitrant and ego-dominant intelligent weapon into a harmless, demagicked weapon.

In the second riddle, Sir Morgan is a centaur.

The third riddle involves a rebus: ram + page = rampage.

Cryptograms: The message is, "Break the mirror and you'll see the light." Only a few words have the pattern of "mirror" (among them "cheese" and "cannon").

Quotation puzzles: The quote box's lyrics: "I walk the maze of moments/but everywhere I turn to/begins a new beginning/but never finds a finish."

The acrostic puzzle features the word list of silk, homicide, fertile, and mortal. The acrostic's quote spells out, "The left door is a killer mimic."

Word searches: The gems are circled. The word list is: agate, amber, cat's-eye, chrysoberyl, coral, diamond, emerald, garnet, jacinth, jade, jet, moonstone, onyx, opal, pearl, peridot, quartz, ruby, sapphire, topaz. (Note that beryl might also be considered in the puzzle, since it's inside chrysoberyl.) Reading the uncircled bold letters from left to right gains the message, "The amethyst is a *gem of seeing*."

Word Games

Initials: The dying breath of a xorn (last letter from aurumvorax, center letter from troll, first letter from remorhaz, and center letter from kenku).

Rebuses: "rein" + "carnation" = "reincarnation."

Completions: ring of mind shielding.

Hidden Words: There are eight Norse gods hidden in the viking priest's message: "Fall, **O** killer, and stab raging **god** incarnate, as **if** it were **the** Lord of Death **Or**dained that **I'd** unleashed in a mighty rage."

Anagrams: She has arranged the pieces of paper incorrectly. The answer "manticore" is an anagram of "cremation."

Additions and deletions: The weapons all become new words if you remove the first letter: "ace" (mace), "word" (sword), "art" (dart), "irk" (dirk), "hip" (whip), "pear" (spear), and "artisan" (partisan).

Containers: Since the man lies about everything, his riddle contains several opposites. What he really means is that he is thinking of a god whose name is "later" outside of "hand," or "Lathander."

Reversals: The collector speaks of a "drow sword."

Homophones: The innkeeper needs the letter E for his recipe. The squares contain images of homophones of letters: "bee," blank, blank, "tea," "jay," "you," "eye," "sea," blank. Filling the blanks with Es gets B-E-E-T-J-U-I-C-E, the tasty beverage. (Actually, to make that, the one ingredient the innkeeper will need is beets.)

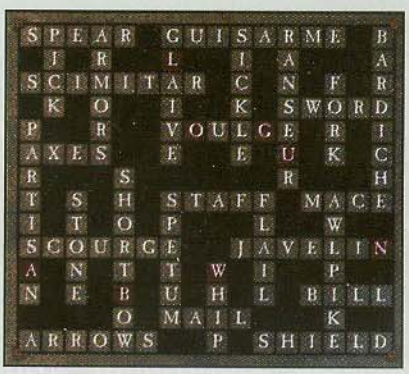
Homographs: The answer is, "Because they die in running water." The scroll asks why vampires fear "flowers," as in "things that flow." The riddle may have left you with the impression that it referred to roses, but that's the tricky part.

Metatheses: The object is a "sceptre," and the guardian is a "spectre."

Letter changes: Maybe, but they should do so only after casting protective spells. The message, when you change one letter per word, spells out "This bottle holds the most mighty demon. Handle it with care."

Crosswords: The weaponry criss cross has the following solution. The shaded squares spell out the phrase "a blowgun."

The 4 × 4 crossword has this solution. The bold-boxed squares spell out the emblem reading in a staircase pattern: "raven."



In addition to being a designer and a creative director of Wizards of the Coast's roleplaying games, Mike is also a world-class puzzlemaker, creating puzzles for such publications as the New York Times, Games Magazine, *and this very periodical. His puzzle game* ALPHABLITZ™ *was* Games's *1998 Word Game of the Year.*

Riddles of the Rhyming Sphinx

by Johnathan M. Richards
illustrated by Carlo Arellano

"What walks upon four legs in the morning, two legs at noon, and three legs at night?" Traditionally, this is the Riddle of the Sphinx. According to classical mythology, those unlucky enough to encounter the sphinx were devoured unless they could successfully answer her riddle. The sphinx dined upon many an unfortunate traveler before Oedipus correctly solved the riddle; the sphinx then killed herself in anguish. The answer, incidentally, is "a man"—who crawls on all fours as a baby (during the "morning" of his life), walks erect on two legs thereafter until, as an old man, he uses a cane (which comprises the third "leg").

The AD&D® game contains four main types of sphinx. One of these, the gynosphinx, is an avid collector of riddles, and she represents the type of sphinx encountered by young Oedipus. When a party encounters a gynosphinx, she might demand that they correctly answer one of her riddles, either to measure their worth or allow them to "earn" the right to pass by without harm. In any event, when roleplaying a gynosphinx encounter, it's best for the Dungeon Master to have a riddle or two handy. While any good library should have several books of riddles, many of these are of the "joke" variety; a gynosphinx's riddles, on the other hand, should lean more toward the "brain-teaser" variety. After all, a gynosphinx takes her riddles seriously. They're her stock in trade, and they might represent the difference between eating her fill of foolish adventurers or going hungry for awhile. (Fortunately, gynosphinxes are honorable; if a party correctly answers her riddle, she's honor bound not to attack them no matter how hungry she is.)

Most gynosphinxes prefer speaking their riddles aloud and have dozens if not hundreds of riddles memorized for possible use. (They do have a "genius" Intelligence rating, after all.) However, some riddles can be figured out only if they are seen written out, and in the spirit of fairness, a gynosphinx usually provides a written copy of riddles such as these. The DM can have the gynosphinx sketch the riddle out in the sand, produce a copy of the riddle that she's laboriously scratched into a slab of soft sandstone with her claw, or perhaps a written copy that she's had an underling transcribe with ink and paper. (A kind DM might even allow a PC to "buy" his life by transcribing a number of the gynosphinx's riddles onto paper if he's unable to solve her riddle himself.)

In addition, a gynosphinx's riddles can often be incorporated into a mechanical door or trap. If the answer to the riddle is a letter or number, it might be possible to open the hidden door or disarm the trap by pressing the stone on which that character appears. This concept would be frequently employed within a gynosphinx's lair and makes it possible for the PCs to match their wits against the gynosphinx's riddles without necessarily encountering the creature herself.

With all of this in mind, here are twenty riddles suitable for gynosphinx use. While gynosphinx riddles need not always rhyme, a rhyming riddle adds an extra bit of style or panache, and gynosphinxes pride themselves upon their general classiness. The answers to each riddle appear at the end.

1

You can see me in darkness but never in light.
I am present in daytime but absent in night.
In the deepest of shadows I stand in plain sight.
What am I?

2

You can find me on a human, or a halfling, or a gnome.
You can find me in a glass of beer, with frothy, sudsy foam.
You can find me in a cabbage patch, growing in the loam.
What am I?

3

You can find me on a human, or a halfling, or a gnome.
I am present in a wizard's wand, but not upon his tome.
I am on a half-orc's hand axe, but not a gray elf's comb.
What am I?

4

Man has but one, ettins two,
Cerberus has three.
Pyrohydrae have only four.
Now tell me, what could that be?

5

Man has but one, as does an elf.
Woman has two, all by herself.
And when it comes to the minotaur,
He has not one, or two, but four.
What is it?

6

I have no sword, I have no spear
Yet rule a horde that many fear.
My soldiers fight with wicked sting;
I rule with might, yet am no king.
What am I?

7

A snyad is said to be sandy of skin.
An ogre enjoys all the gore that he's in.
A skeleton definitely is not sleek,
But a stone giant's tasting one now as we speak.
The derro have order, and maybe you've heard
That in matters of chaos, that drow is the word.
So which kind of monster, if you follow the rule,
Can best be described as a "toughy," you fool?

8

Join each of the following, and so form a link:
The ocean, a sight-orb, a kind of a drink.
To that add a question but one word in length,
Then read me the answer, if your mind has the strength.

9

The color of a dragon's scales,
Certain flowers; certain whales.
The moon is sometimes of this hue,
And so is melancholy, too.
What am I?

10

He dreamt he soared above the earth
And there he met his peer.
It was his beau, and she was worth
All things that he held dear.
And in the androsphinx's dream
He found what battle lacks.
For combat, although it might seem
Like fun, can overtax.
But since it's battle humans make,
A narrow view, it seems,
Name the five weapons you would take
From the androsphinx's dreams.

11

It's in the eye of the beholder, it's in the presence of a lich.
Many times it will be found within the spellbook of a witch.
It's in the aura of a dragon when it finally comes of age.
It's what comes to visit when you first speak on the stage.
What is it?

12

Abracadabra and Alakazam,
Hocus, Pocus, Addaboombam.
Take just a second on each magic word
And name me the substance that those words conjured.

13

Take the colors of the rainbow, and multiply by three.
Subtract from that past tense of eat, it's easy as can be.
Now add a three-digit number, a synonym for "ick,"
Add three more; divide it by the corners on a brick.
What number am I?

14

Search the whole world over, you won't find me on land.
But in the oceans and the seas you'll find that I'm at hand.
You can search the phlogiston, you'll never see me once.
But in the void of airless space I'm found by he who hunts.
Seek me on a mountain-top, you'll never find a trace.
And yet I'm present in each member of the human race.
What am I?

15

It's with me when I take a seat,
And take a load off of my feet.
But I no sooner stand and then
I find that it is gone again.
What is it?

16

Begin with the days in a dozen fortnights.
Divide by the number of eyes in two wights.
To that add the legs of three bees a'buzzin'.
And finally, subtract a good baker's dozen.
What number am I?

17

My first is in Ghost, but isn't in Ghoul.
My second's in Spirit, but isn't in Stool.
My third is in Death, but not in Good Deal.
My fourth is in Lich, but isn't in Heal.
My fifth is in Haunt, but isn't in Tooth.
My sixth is in Onyx, but isn't in Youth.
What am I?

The Old Bait and Switch

One of the nice things about using riddles in adventures is they cross all boundaries: A player with a 1st-level fighter has the same chance to solve a riddle as a player running a 20th-level wizard with an 18 Intelligence. No special character class abilities are needed, and there are no racial modifiers. Players of any age can come up with the solution to a riddle.

Unfortunately, not everyone is good at riddles. It's frustrating for players to know that it's important for their party to solve a particular riddle when they have no clue what the answer is. As a last resort, a kind DM might allow each PC to make an Intelligence check to determine whether the character can figure out the riddle's solution even if the player can't, but this isn't as satisfying for the players as when they can solve the riddle themselves.

To help such players, here are two riddles patterned after riddle #8. If the players are exposed to riddle #8, the next time a riddle is needed in an adventure, the DM can spring one of these on them and they should be able to figure it out for themselves, after having seen the trick involved. Likewise, any other riddles can be made easier by introducing the trick in an earlier riddle, then presenting the PCs with a similar riddle. Think of how smart they'll feel!

A

Begin with a bird that has feathers of blue.
Add to it a syllable said in surprise.
To that add a yellow-striped insect that flies,
Then read me the word that is formed when you do.

B

Begin with ten people lined up at the gate.
Add to it the curly-haired mountain ram's mate.
Add a pirate's okay and a vegetable green,
Then read me the word, if you know which I mean.

Answers

A. "Bird that has feathers of blue" = "Jay" = "J," "syllable said in surprise" = "Oh!" = "O," "yellow-striped insect that flies" = "bee" = "B." The answer is "Job."

B. "Ten people lined up at the gate" = "queue" = "Q," "curly-haired mountain ram's mate" = "ewe" = "U," "pirate's okay" = "aye" = "I," "vegetable green" = "pea" = "P." The answer is "quip."

Answers

A. "Bird that has feathers of blue" = "jay" = "J;" "syllable said in surprise" = "Oh!" = "O;" "yellow-striped insect that flies" = "bee" = "B." The answer is "job."

B. "Ten people lined up at the gate" = "queue" = "Q;" "curly-haired mountain ram's mate" = "ewe" = "U;" "pirate's okay" = "aye" = "I;" "vegetable green" = "pea" = "P." The answer is "quip."

18

You see before you four of these,
Of these there is no lack.
I grant one of five minutes' time,
Then you become my snack.
What is it?

19

First is O, then is T, then is T again.
After that we have two F's, that's F as found in "fen."
Next in line there is an S, and after that another.
Finally we have an E, but this one has no brother.
O, T, T, F, F, S, S, and finally an E.
The next to fall in sequence, can you state what that will be?

20

My first is in Key, but isn't in Eye.
My second's in Ill, but isn't in Lye.
My next two are found in Lid, not Bird.
And now we must pause and start a second word.
My fifth is in May, but isn't in Say.
My sixth is in He, but isn't in Hay.
What phrase am I?

I'm a freelancer whose work can be seen
In both DUNGEON® Adventures *and* DRAGON® Magazine.
My "Challenge of Champions" series has grown,
And in DRAGON, *it's mostly for "Ecologies" I'm known.*
Who am I?

Answers

1. There are two possible answers to this riddle: the letter "a" or the letter "d." Both appear in "darkness," "daytime," and "shadows," but not in "light" or "night."

2. "A head." Besides the body part, it refers to both a head of foam and a head of cabbage.

3. The letter "n," which is present in the words "human," "halfling," "gnome," "wand," and "half-orc's hand axe," but not in the words "tome" or "gray elf's comb."

4. Although the obvious answer seems to be "heads," pyrohydrae have either seven or eight heads, not four. The correct answer is "syllables."

5. "Vowels."

6. "A queen bee." Simply "a queen," "a prince," and the like are not possible answers because of the phrase "wicked sting" in the third line: most human soldiers use swords, spears, pikes, or similar weapons, but not stings.

7. "An otyugh." The "rule" eluded to in the riddle is to use anagrams: "synad" is an anagram of "sandy"; similarly, "ogre" and "gore" are anagrams, as are "skeleton" and "not sleek," "stone giant" and "tasting one," "derro" and "order," and "drow" and "word."

8. This riddle requires some deciphering. "Ocean" = "sea" = "C." "Sight-orth" = "eye" = "I," "A kind of a drink" = "tea" = "T." "A question but one word in length" = "Why?" = "Y." Thus, the answer is "city."

9. "The color blue." The riddle refers to blue dragons, numerous blue-colored flowers, blue whales, "once in a blue moon," and the phrase "feeling blue" to denote sadness.

10. The five weapons are as follows: a sword, a spear, a bow, a battle-ax, and an arrow. The weapons are taken from the following lines of the riddle (called "The Andrisphinx's Dream"): line 1: "soared" = "sword;" line 2: "his peer" = "his spear;" line 3: "beau" = "bow;" line 6: "battle lacks" = "battle-ax;" line 10: "a narrow" = "an arrow."

11. "Fear." One of a beholder's eyes shoots a fear ray; the auras of both liches and dragons can cause magical fear; *fear* is a 4th-level wizard spell; stage fright is a form of fear.

12. The vital clue to this riddle is "take just a second." By taking the second letter from the words "Abracadabra," "Alakazam," "Hocus," "Pocus," and "Addaboombam," the word "blood" is formed; thus "blood" is the name of the substance "conjured" by the magic words.

13. This is a simple math problem involving some word play. There are seven colors in a rainbow (red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, and violet). "Past tense of eat" is another way to say "ate," which is a homonym for "eight." The synonym for "lick" is "gross." In measurement terms, a gross is a 12 dozen, or 144. A brick, as a six-sided structure, has 8 corners. Thus, $7 \times 3 = 21$; $21 - 8 = 13$; $13 + 144 = 157$; $157 + 3 = 160$; $160 \% 8 = 20$. The answer is "20."

14. The letter "e," which is present in "oceans," "seas," "void of airless space," and "each member of the human race," yet absent in "land," "philogiston," and "mountain-top."

15. "Your lap," which is with you when you sit but vanishes (by definition) when you stand.

16. This is a simple math problem, although knowledge of measurements is required. There are 14 days in a fortnight, so a dozen fortnights is 168 days. A wight has two eyes, so two wights have four. Bees, as insects, have six legs apiece, so three bees have a total of 18 legs. Finally, a baker's dozen is 13. Thus, $168 \div 4 = 42$; $42 + 18 = 60$; $60 - 13 = 47$. The answer is "47."

17. The answer to this one is "sphinx."

18. This riddle is especially popular among gynosphinxes; they enjoy the fact that the answer to their riddle is stating the would-be riddle-solver in the face. (The gynosphinx herself has four paws and grants a pause of five minutes for the victims to arrive at the solution before she attacks.) Note that this riddle works only when the gynosphinx herself is present and doesn't work well when members of other races recite it (unless they also have four paws).

19. The sequence O–T–F–F–S–S–E is the first letter of the numbers one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, and eight; thus the answer is "N," the first letter of the number nine.

20. This final riddle is a set-up, used for when the gynosphinx's hunger outweighs her sense of fair play. A close examination of the words used in the puzzle shows that there is only one choice for each of the six letters in the two-word phrase. When put in order, the answer is: "kill me." If the answer is spoken the gynosphinx, having kindly been given permission by her potential prey, jumps to the attack! (Clever players will have their PCs state the answer something like this: "The answer to your riddle is the phrase 'kill me,' but in no way do I authorize this procedure; I hold you to your promise of safe passage upon successfully answering your riddle." The gynosphinx won't like it, but when pointed out to her in this fashion, her honor and sense of fair play will win out over her hunger.)

Answers

1. There are two possible answers to this riddle: the letter "a" or the letter "d." Both appear in "darkness," "daytime," and "shadows," but not in "light" or "night."

2. "A head." Besides the body part, it refers to both a head of foam and a head of cabbage.

3. The letter "n," which is present in the words "human," "halfling," "gnome," "wand," and "half-orc's hand axe," but not in the words "tome" or "gray elf's comb."

4. Although the obvious answer seems to be "heads," pyrohydrae have either seven or eight heads, not four. The correct answer is "syllables."

5. "Vowels."

6. "A queen bee." Simply "a queen," "a prince," and the like are not possible answers because of the phrase "wicked sting" in the third line: most human soldiers use swords, spears, pikes, or similar weapons, but not stings.

7. "An otyugh." The "rule" eluded to in the riddle is to use anagrams: "synad" is an anagram of "sandy;" similarly, "ogre" and "gore" are anagrams, as are "skeleton" and "not sleek," "stone giant" and "tasting one," "derro" and "order," and "drow" and "word."

8. This riddle requires some deciphering. "Ocean" = "sea" = "C." "Sight-orb" = "eye" = "I." "A kind of a drink" = "tea" = "T." "A question but one word in length" = "Why?" = "Y." Thus, the answer is "city."

9. "The color blue." The riddle refers to blue dragons, numerous blue-colored flowers, blue whales, "once in a blue moon," and the phrase "feeling blue" to denote sadness.

10. The five weapons are as follows: a sword, a spear, a bow, a battle-ax, and an arrow. The weapons are taken from the following lines of the riddle (called "The Androsphinx's Dream"): line 1: "soared" = "sword;" line 2: "his peer" = "his spear;" line 3: "beau" = "bow;" line 6: "battle lacks" = "battle-ax;" line 10: "a narrow" = "an arrow."

11. "Fear." One of a beholder's eyes shoots a fear ray; the auras of both liches and dragons can cause magical fear; *fear* is a 4th-level wizard spell; stage fright is a form of fear.

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The Totem Deck

A Deck of Many Wild Things

By Patric Neagle and Sean W. Kliethermes

Illustrated by Shawn Sharp

GILDBOUGH HOLDS THE IVORY-INLAID CARD CASE UP TO THE LIGHT. The intricate patterning on the case is enticing, a promise of the magic held within. He glances once at the others; his eyes are nervous. With a nod, Amberel motions for him to proceed. Gildbough takes a deep breath and draws a card from the deck. As the card is freed, there is a tinkling sound, and tiny golden balls of light begin to swirl around the adventurer.

Already Amberel has gained a keep, and Hermios' card granted him strength beyond anyone's wildest imaginings.

Gildbough turns the card around to see his destiny. "Oh, man," says the DM, "I'm sorry, Pete. Gildbough just got nailed with the Void. His body functions, but his soul is trapped elsewhere."

The GM looks at the other players, "Anyone else want to try?"

The *deck of many things* is one of the most powerful items a party can find, short of an artifact (and even some of those don't measure up). Sometimes it can be too powerful. Party directions can change, and games can become unbalanced. Of course, you say, it's up to the DM to prevent this from happening—if a result is going to wreak havoc with a campaign, then change the result, or don't put a deck into the game in the first place.

All good advice, of course, but not good enough for the DM who can't resist a little random treasure rolling. And, let's face it, the reason that the *deck of many things* has survived from its first incarnation in the GREYHAWK® rules is that we (DMs and players both) like the anticipation the randomness creates, that held breath and sweaty palm as we turn the card over: What will happen to that favorite character? Will the result be for good or for ill?

So, what is the DM who wishes to include a *deck* in her campaign to do if she doesn't wish it to have game-world shattering effects?

Well, luckily, the *deck of many things* isn't the only one of its kind to be crafted. Throughout the years, many mages (and some say a deity or two) have taken it upon themselves to design other decks, decks that aren't as all-powerful as the original. In other words—*minor decks of many things*.

The cards in a *minor deck of many things* correspond to the fifty-four cards in a regular playing deck (including the two jokers). A character can draw only a single card from any given *deck*, but up to ten characters can draw before the *deck* teleports to a new locale. The cards don't replenish after each draw; they do so only after the *deck* has teleported.

Most cards discharge their magic upon being drawn, although some effects might not become apparent for some time.

Minor decks of many things come in a variety of sizes and shapes, from small, regular-sized decks of playing cards to backpack-sized monstrosities requiring a cart and mule to tote around. All, however, are of exquisite craftsmanship and quite valuable.

Here is one representative of such a *deck*: the *totem deck of many things*.

Totem Deck

The *totem deck of many things* harnesses the magic of nature, specifically (but not exclusively) of the animal kingdom. The cards are tattooed with crude animalistic representations of creatures both mythical and mundane on tanned and stiffened animal hides. Unless otherwise noted, a card releases its magic immediately upon being drawn. Most of the effects of the *totem deck* are permanent unless otherwise indicated in the card's description. Effects, good or ill, can be negated by casting a *limited wish* upon the affected character.

To determine the card drawn from a *totem deck of many things*, the DM should have the player draw from a regular deck of playing cards and consult the table below to see what image appears on the drawn card. If an actual deck of playing cards is not available, roll 1d6 and 1d10 and consult **Table 1**, reading 1d6 across and 1d10 down. DMs with access to a color copy machine might like to copy the illustrations that follow the article and paste them onto a deck of playing cards for a great game prop.

Random Card Generation Table

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	♥A Chimera	♥5 Gazelle	♦9 Eagle	♣K Phoenix	♣4 Swan	♠8 Skunk
2	♥K Gorgon	♥4 Leech	♦8 Cobra	♣Q Spirit	♣3 Salamander	♠7 Mule
3	♥Q Kraken	♥3 Manatee	♦7 Roadrunner	♣J Treant	♠2 Dolphin	♠6 Goblin
4	♥J Pixie	♥2 Penguin	♦6 Elephant	♣10 Hound	♠A Leprechaun	♠5 Chameleon
5	♥10 Monkey	♦A Cyclops	♦5 Horse	♣9 Fire Beetle	♠K Ghost	♠4 Turkey
6	♥9 Wolf	♦K Cube	♦4 Spider	♣8 Peacock	♠Q Nymph	♠3 Stag
7	♥8 Owl	♦Q Sphinx	♦3 Boar	♣7 Fox	♠J Lurker	♠2 Kangaroo
8	♥7 Bat	♦J Tarrasque	♦2 Mongoose	♣6 Panther	♠10 Elven Cat	🃏 Unicorn
9	♥6 Honeybee	♦10 Human	♣A Griffin	♣5 Ox	♠9 Fireflies	🃏 Dragon
10	Ignore this result; roll 1d10 again.					

CARD DESCRIPTIONS

Bat: At night, the character grows leathery wings that grant the ability to fly with a movement rate of 18 and a maneuverability class of C.

Boar: One time, the drawing character can fight to –7 hp before dying (or falling unconscious, if the optional Hovering at Death's Door rule is used).

Chameleon: The character can *shapechange* into a normal animal once. This effect lasts until the drawer wishes to return to normal form.

Chimera: The character's head transforms into the head of one of the following (roll a d6): goat (1–3), lion (4–5), or a dragon (6). The character retains her intelligence and ability to speak. No special powers are conferred.

Cobra: The cobra depicted on the card animates and bites the character (no attack roll required). The DM should consult the poison table in the "Snake" entry of the *Monstrous Manual*™ book to see what poison has been injected into the character.

Cube, Gelatinous: The air in a 10' × 10' area around the drawn card is transformed into a gelatinous cube. The cube proceeds to eat anything else in the area, remaining until slain.

Cyclops: The character grows a large, red eye in the center of his forehead. This eye glares and blinks randomly at those near the character, thereby reducing his Charisma by 4 if left uncovered.

Dolphin: The character gains the Swimming nonweapon proficiency (if he or she doesn't already have it) and a movement rate of 30 when traveling underwater.

Dragon: The character is engulfed in red dragon breath that inflicts 2d10 + 1 points of damage (no saving throw).

Eagle: The drawer's visibility ranges are doubled.

Elephant: The drawer permanently gains +1 to Intelligence.

Elven Cat: Once, the drawer can send a single mental message to any being she desires, regardless of that entity's location.

Fire Beetle: The character is never without a light source in normal darkness. The character can always find a torch or lantern lying around nearby, or flint and steel or oil for his own light sources.

Fireflies: The card dissolves into a swarm of fireflies that harmlessly surround the drawing character and affect her as the 1st-level priest spell *faerie fire* for 24 hours.

Fox: The character can automatically see through the next illusion encountered.

Gazelle: The drawing character's running movement rate is doubled.

Ghost: The drawing character's hair turns white. If it's already white, then her hair falls out.

Goblin: In bright sunlight, the drawing character suffers a –1 penalty to attack rolls.

Gorgon: The drawer's skin becomes covered in thick, metallic scales that are the equivalent of platemail armor (even for the purpose of determining thieving abilities) and that reduce the character's Dexterity by 3 points.

Griffon: All horses (even a paladin's warhorse) refuse to come within 20 feet of the drawing character.

Honeybee: The drawer can *levitate* as the 2nd-level wizard spell cast at the 3rd level of ability, once per day.

Horse: The drawing character knows the alignment of one stranger (chosen by the character).

Hound: The drawing character gains the Tracking nonweapon proficiency (or gains a +1 bonus to the proficiency if the character already has it).

Human, Berserker: During the character's next battle, he enters a berserker fury (see Humans: Berserkers in the *Monstrous Manual*™ book) until the end of that combat.

Kangaroo: The character can jump vertically or horizontally a distance equal to three times her height.

Kraken: The first sea-, river-, or lake-going vessel that the character sets foot upon sinks in 1d4 days.

Leech: Whenever the drawing character inflicts damage upon an opponent, the drawer regains 1 hit point. (Hit points regained cannot exceed the character's maximum.)

Leprechaun: All the character's platinum pieces turn to gold; all gold turns to silver; all silver turns to copper; all copper turns to platinum. This affects only coins carried by the drawer, not those stored in some vault somewhere.

Lurker: When drawn, this card transforms into a 6' × 9' *carpet of flying*. The *carpet* can be used for 10 hours of flight time before it turns into a lurker. The lurker remains until killed.

Manatee: The drawing character is affected as by the 3rd-level wizard spell *slow* for 24 hours.

Mongoose: The drawer permanently gains a +1 bonus to Dexterity.

Monkey (with hand covering mouth): The drawing character can't tell a lie for 24 hours.

Mule: The character's weight allowance is doubled.

Nymph: The drawer becomes completely naked. All clothing and equipment not physically part of the drawer's body disappears for 24 hours. At the end of this time it all returns, piled at the drawer's feet, unharmed.

Owl: The drawer permanently gains a +1 bonus to Wisdom.

Ox: The drawing characters Intelligence drops to 3, and her Strength rises to 18. For each day that passes, the character's Intelligence rises by one point and her Strength drops by 1 point until Intelligence returns to normal and Strength is permanently 1 point higher than originally.

Panther: The character gains a 65% chance to Move Silently and Hide in Shadows as long as he is alone and unarmored. Characters who already possess these abilities have this percentage added to their score—up to a maximum of 95%.

Peacock: The drawer permanently gains a +1 bonus to Charisma.

Penguin: The drawing character becomes immune to cold, as if she were wearing a *ring of warmth*.

Phoenix: The drawer can produce a small tongue of flame from his index finger at will. This flame can be used to start small fires but isn't large enough to cause damage to an opponent.

Pixie: As soon as this card is drawn it dissolves into a horde (1d100 × 10) of illusory pixies. The pixies passively follow the character around for 24 hours, but during combat (and other inopportune times) they fly around and investigate everything nearby (by poking at it). While in this cloud of pixies, vision is reduced to 2 feet, and all attacks and saving throws are made at a –2 penalty (since there are pixies poking everybody). Spellcasters must make successful Intelligence checks to cast spells.

Roadrunner: The character must draw two more cards or replace a card already drawn back into the deck. The effect of a returned card is then negated.

Salamander: The drawing character is immune to fires as if she were wearing a *ring of fire resistance*, but cold attacks cause 1 extra point of damage per die.

Skunk: The character is afflicted with horrendous body odor, which lowers his Charisma by 1 point. When the character is nervous or excited (during combat, for instance) everyone within 10 feet of the character must make a successful saving throw vs. poison or else suffer a –1 penalty to attack rolls.

Sphinx: The drawer gains the ability to read any written language encountered, with the exception of magical writing. The text appears to be written in the character's native language.

Spider: The drawing character can cast the 2nd-level wizard spell *web* at the 3rd level of ability once per day.

Spirit, Animal: The drawing character gains the use of an *unseen servant* once per day. The *servant* acts in all regards as the 1st-level wizard spell of the same name, cast at the 3rd level of ability.

Stag: The drawer permanently gains a +1 bonus to Constitution.

Swan: All liquids carried by the drawer are turned into a particularly fine wine. This effect is permanent and affects magical liquids.

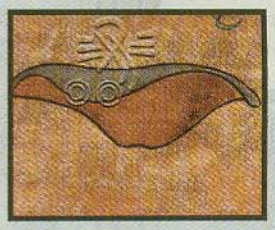
Tarrasque: The next successful attack that the character makes results in a killing blow. The victim is allowed a saving throw vs. death magic if his level or Hit Dice exceeds the attacker's.

Treant: Any fire-based attack on the character enjoys a +4 bonus to hit and a +1 bonus to damage rolls. Saving throws vs. fire-based attacks suffer a –4 penalty.

Turkey: The character's favored weapon is *polymorphed* into a delicious, roasted turkey leg. This effect ends after 24 hours, unless the turkey leg has been eaten, in which case the weapon is lost.

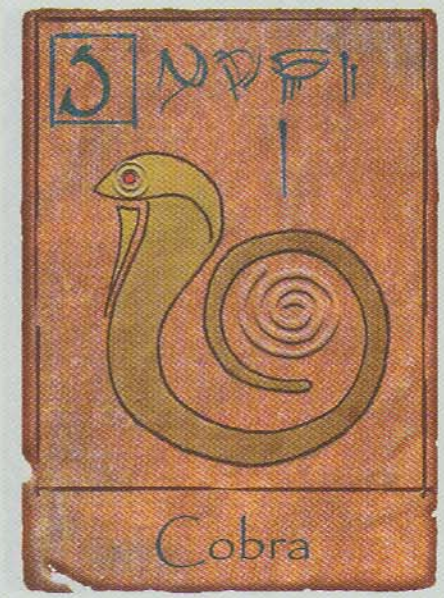
Unicorn: The drawer is immune to poisons.

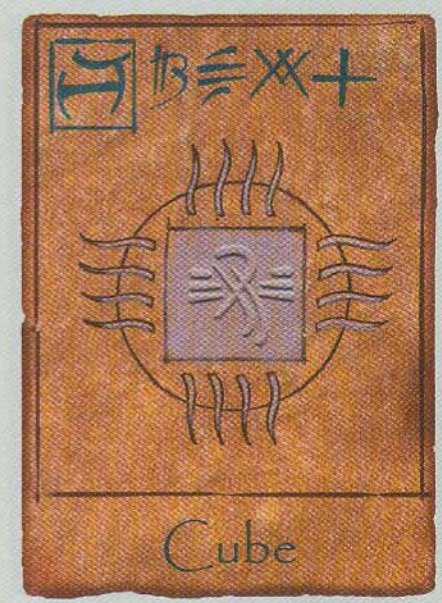
Wolf: The character is stricken with lycanthropy (werewolf).



Patrick and Sean promise to write for us again as soon as their pens revert back from turkey-leg form.

TOTEM DECK





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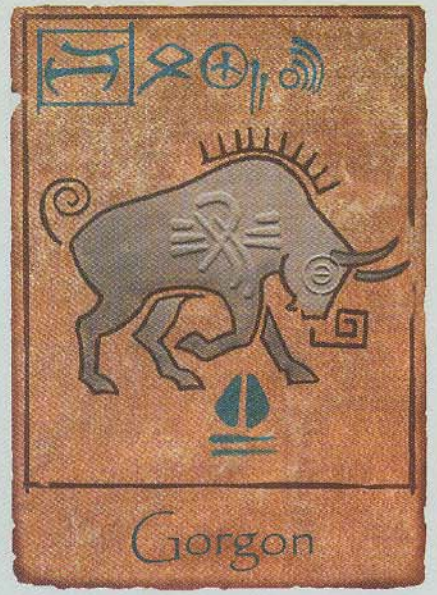

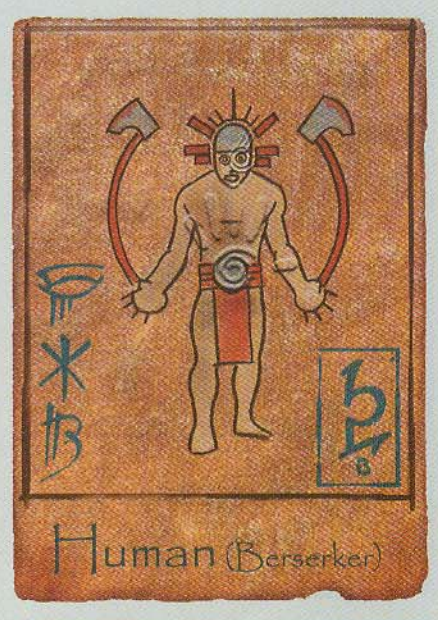

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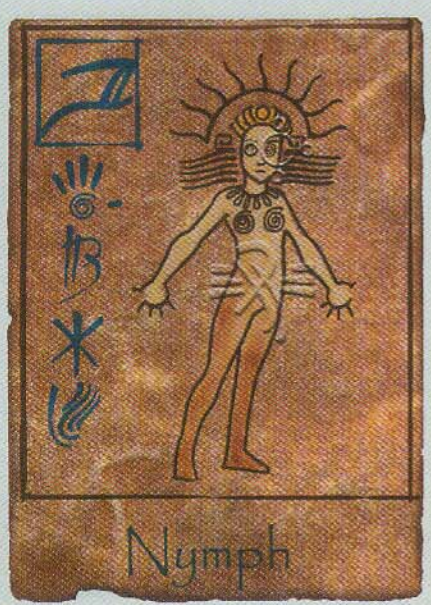

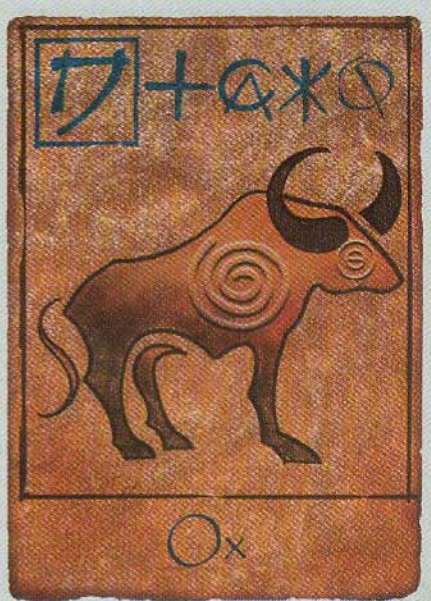

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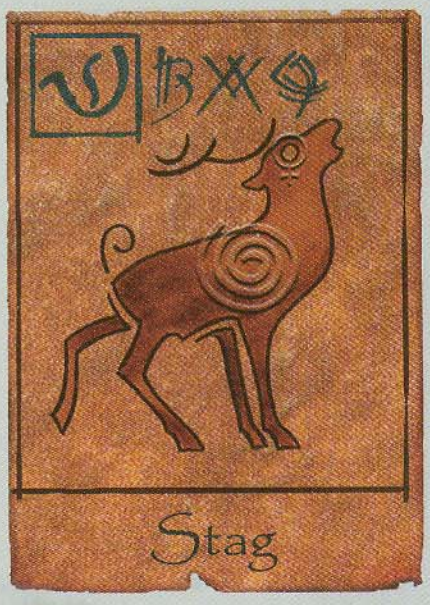

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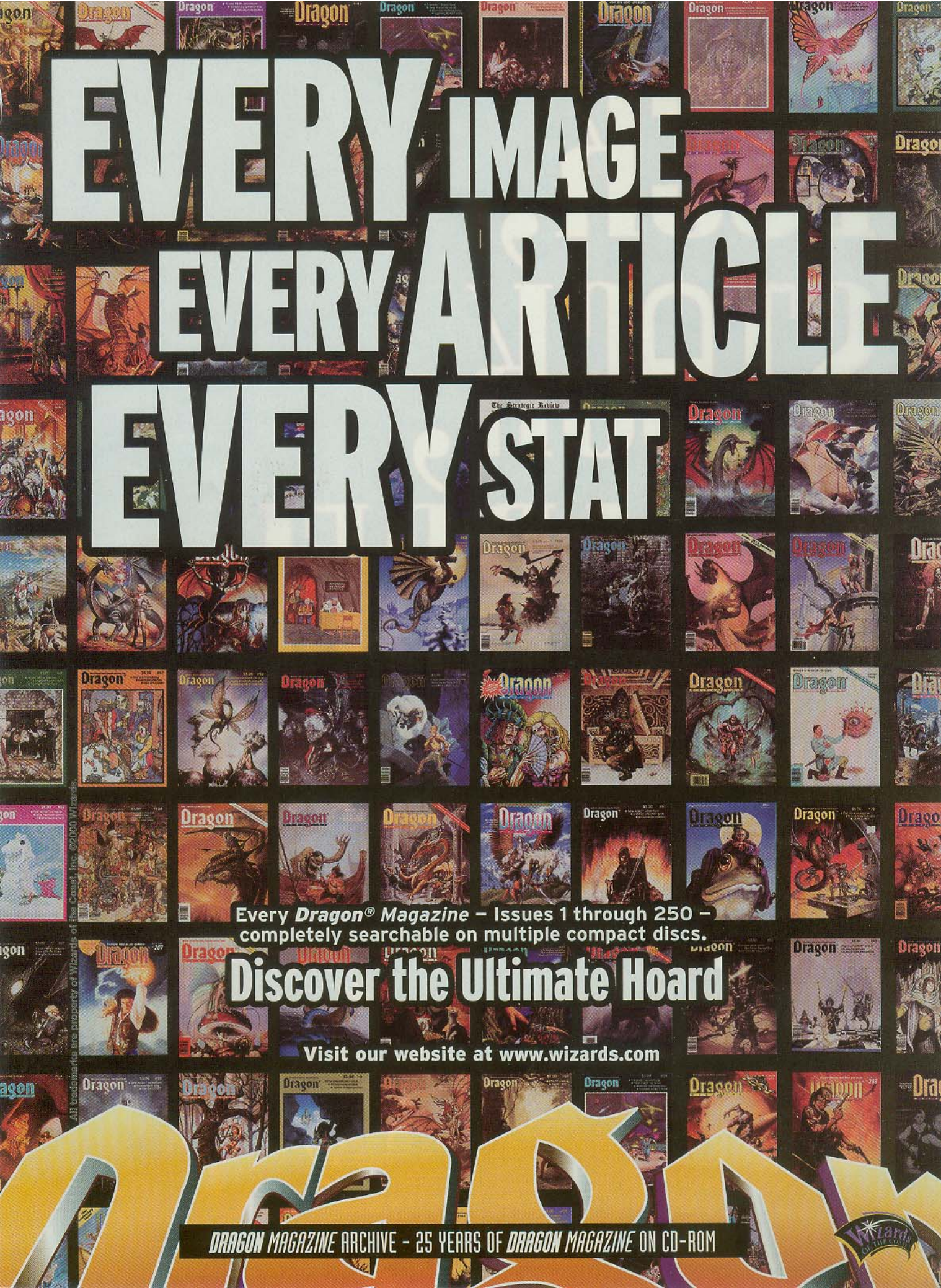
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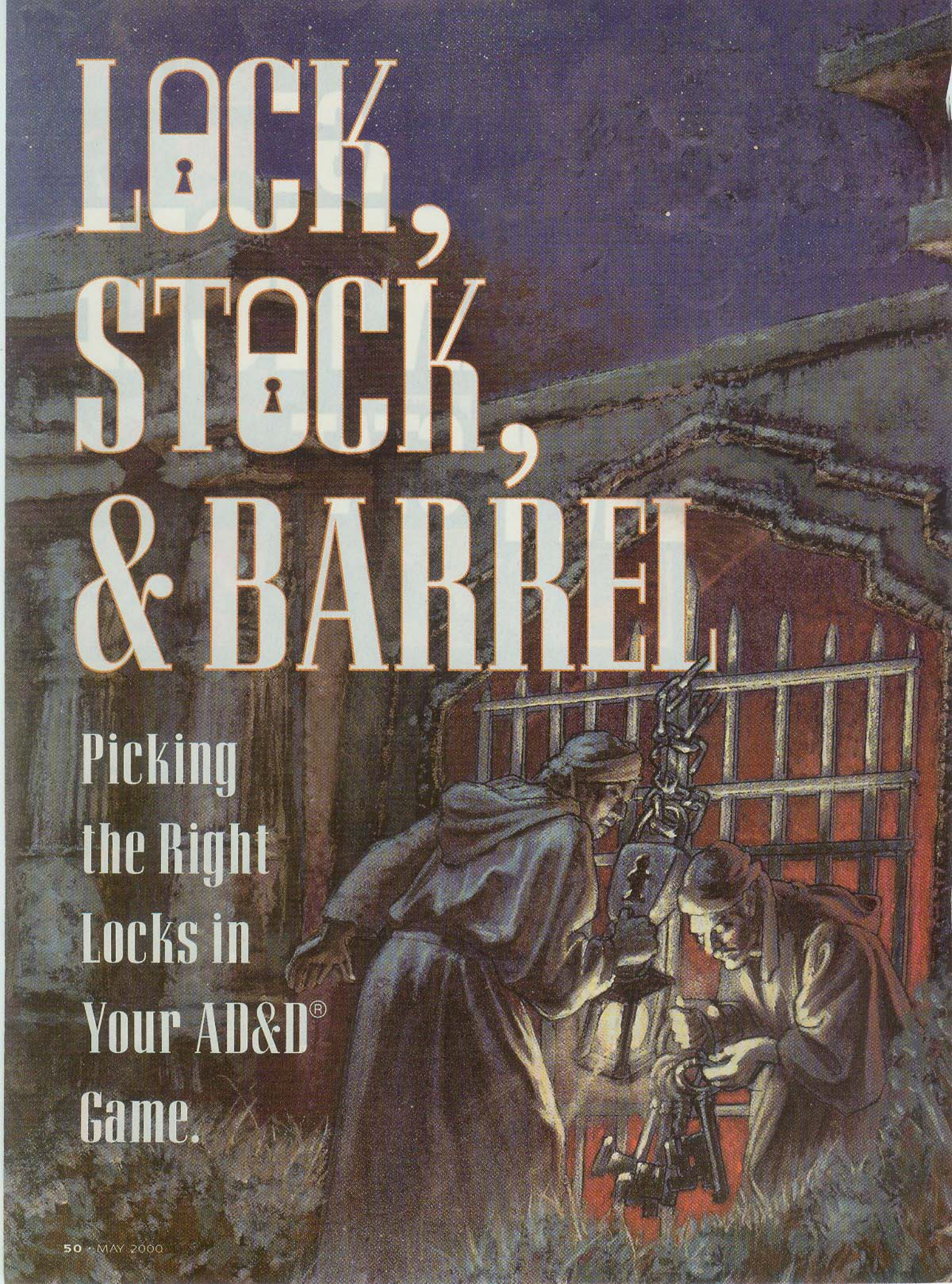
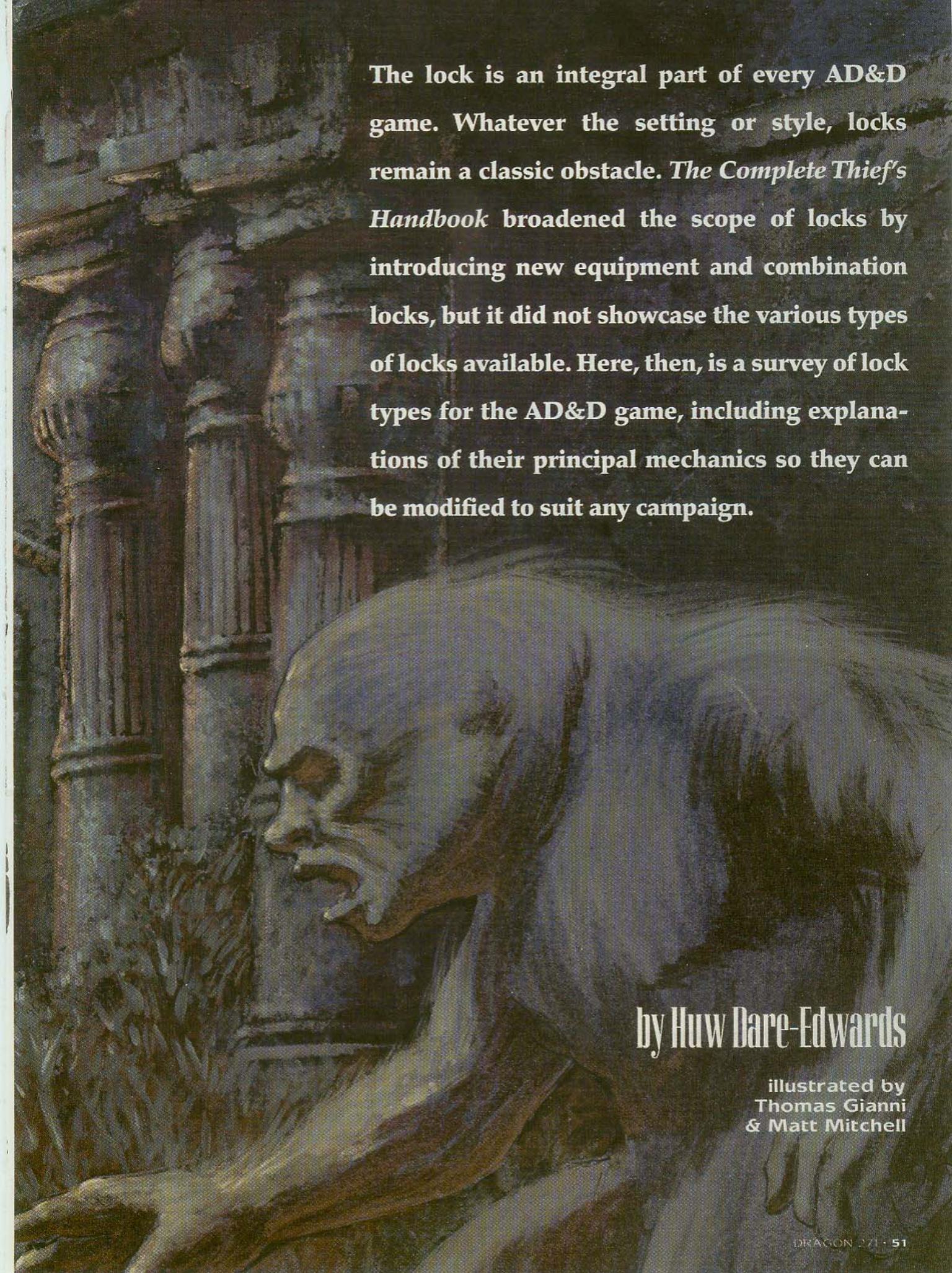
LOCK, STOCK, & BARREL

Picking the Right Locks in Your AD&D® Game.





The lock is an integral part of every AD&D game. Whatever the setting or style, locks remain a classic obstacle. *The Complete Thief's Handbook* broadened the scope of locks by introducing new equipment and combination locks, but it did not showcase the various types of locks available. Here, then, is a survey of lock types for the AD&D game, including explanations of their principal mechanics so they can be modified to suit any campaign.

by Huw Dare-Edwards

illustrated by
Thomas Gianni
& Matt Mitchell

Note on Materials

In the AD&D game, the most common lock materials are wood and bronze. That is not to say that the best locks are produced from these materials, only that wood and bronze lend themselves easily to being shaped. Iron is difficult to work and corrodes, so it is usually relegated to simple pieces (the bolt, faceplates, and so on). Wood is prone to expansion and contraction, making it tricky but important for the locksmith to compensate for these shifts while retaining a secure lock.

Bone and ivory are also used in locks, as are precious metals (gold, silver, and platinum). These materials, although proof against corrosion, are soft. In fact, many locksmiths use these materials to build safety mechanisms that destroy the lock when it is put under too much stress. Stone has also been put to successful use in the building of locks by a few underground races, though this practice hasn't yet found its way to the surface.

Magic has produced a wide array of desirable materials including *ironwood*, *glassteel*, and strengthened metals that are resistant to acid and corrosion or that are as light as a feather. Magical materials are expensive and in short supply, so they are rarely used in locks.

Oil is necessary to lubricate the lock, while graphite is important for the finer pieces, as it doesn't attract dust. The best locks incorporate a mixture of materials: an iron faceplate to hinder drilling, silver pins or brass levers, and so forth.

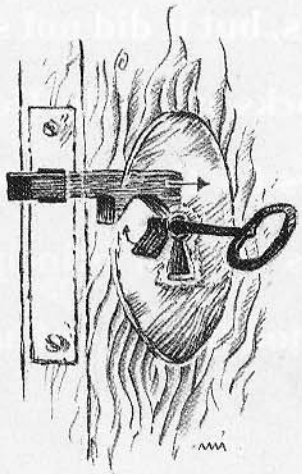
Lock Types

The description of each lock type follows this pattern:

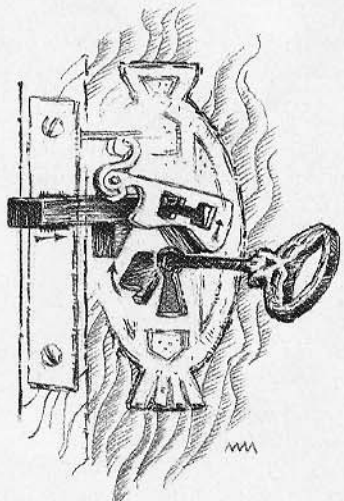
Name and Description: This section provides the lock's outward appearance, the basic function of its mechanics, and its essential locking mechanism.

Usage: Here is the information on where a lock is most likely to be found and how commonly it might be encountered. Unless otherwise stated, all of the locks can be contained in one of three basic types of housing: Mortared, where the lock is built into a secured surface (like many doors); Rim or Surface-Mounted, where the lock is housed within an independent unit that is then attached onto the surface to be secured; and Padlock, which is a self-contained lock.

Security: This section contains suggested modifiers and additional rules for handling the lock in play. These modifiers work cumulatively with adjustments from the Lock Quality Table (in Chapter 6 of the *DUNGEON MASTER® Guide*) and assume the lock is of average workmanship. Note that some lock types require a more highly skilled craftsman. These adjustments can be modified further by the lock's quality, at the DM's discretion—a ward lock of extraordinary craftsmanship and a rusty pin lock have very different adjustments to those listed—although penalties over 80% are not recommended unless the thief has other ways to overcome the obstacle.



Ward Lock



Lever Lock

Ward Locks

The ward lock is a heavy-duty and reliable lock. It has a thick metal casing encapsulating a massive bolt and a simple locking mechanism. This locking mechanism, paradoxically, is its weak point. The key (inserted into the lock and turned) simply raises the bolt slightly, allowing it to move freely, then physically pushes (or pulls) the bolt into the locked (or unlocked) position. The lock's powerful springs and the fact that the key directly moves the bolt give the lock a feeling of strength and security.

To stop just any key from being used in the lock there are ridges—known as wards—inside the keyhole. These wards impede the movement of a wrong key. With a thief's picks, these wards are easy to bypass, but the concept has been retained and used to improve other types of locks.

Usage: Ward locks commonly appear on doors. In this role, despite the Locksmiths Guild's attempts to discourage its wider use, it can be found everywhere. Another common method is for the lock to be installed as a one-sided lock: this makes the keyhole accessible from only one side of the door, creating a bolt-yourself-in lock or a one-sided lock for garden sheds and the like.

Security: To a nonthief, ward locks are secure and can be opened only by force; to a thief, however, even well constructed ward locks are relatively easy to pick, granting a +25% bonus to any Open Locks attempt. Even the blank side of a one-sided door lock can often be opened. By removing the door handle and manipulating the knob cam, the thief can gain access to the locking mechanism and pick the lock. This requires more skill from the thief, increasing the difficulty of opening to a standard, unmodified check.

Lever Locks

The lever lock (or, in full, the lever tumbler lock) is more complicated than the ward lock and is used mainly for light security. The locking mechanism consists of a series of levers that rise and descend depending on the cut depth of the key. When the levers are aligned, the key is free to move the bolt.

Each lever consists of a flat metal rectangle pivoted in the lock and sprung to hold it in place. In each lever there is a hole shaped like an "H" cut out at different heights on each lever. This shape can vary, but the concept remains the same. Usually about 4–8 of these levers are then stacked into the lock case on top of the bolt. The bolt is just another rectangle of metal but from it protrudes a bolt pin. The bolt pin protrudes through the upper right-hand corners of all the Hs in all of the levers when in the unlocked position. When thrust into the lock, the key engages the bolt with its point and raises the levers to the set amount (the lock's combination) that brings the bolt pin in alignment with the horizontal path in all of the Hs. This position forms a bridge that frees the bolt to slide in and out of the locked position by the rotation of the key.

Usage: Chests, jewelry-cases, drawers, cabinets, wardrobes, cupboards, and boxes are the most common homes of the lever lock. The locks are cheap and relatively easy to create, making them as widespread as the ward lock. They also have a better standing within the Locksmiths Guild, but the majority of them are still left to the apprentice locksmith to build.

Security: The security of a lever lock is measured by the number of levers that are stacked into its case. In the case of low security locks or particularly small locks, only a few (1–4) levers are used; with a chest or a more important lock, around 10–14 levers are built into the casing. Locksmiths have experimented with as many as thirty or more levers but have found them ungainly and ineffective in comparison to better locks.

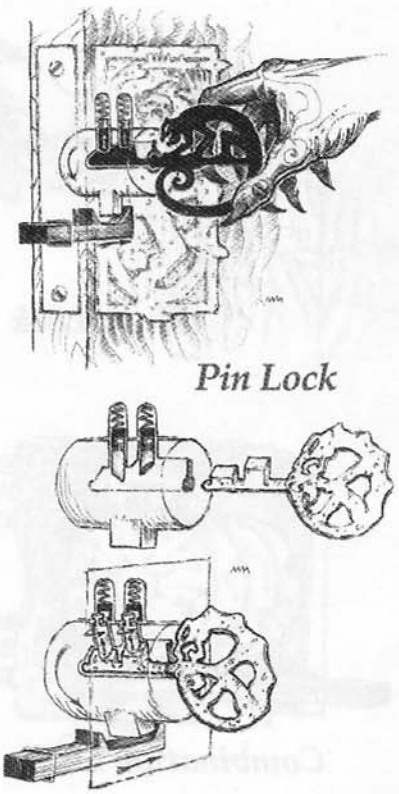
# Levers	Open Locks Adjustment
1–4	+10%
5–9 levers	—
10–14 levers	–15%
20+ levers	–20%

Pin Locks

Versatile and effective, pin locks are the most ancient of all mechanical locks. The Locksmiths' Guild has great respect for them, and their basic design has been modified and upgraded for centuries.

The pin lock usually consists of two cylinders, one inside the other, forming the lock's hull. Through these two pieces, down to about half depth, runs a line of holes. In these holes, blocking the rotation of the inner cylinder, is a series of short pins. These pins form the crux of the lock.

Each pin is actually a set of two pins of varying length stacked on top of each other. The upper pin is called the *driver pin*, while the lower pin is known as the *key pin*. Locksmiths habitually color code the pins to make it easier to repair or change the combination of the lock.



Pin Lock

The code varies between locksmiths, but it is practically impossible without magical aid to discern them when they are inside the lock.

To open the lock, the mechanism must be brought to the *shear line*. The key must align the breaks in the pins at the border between the two cylinders by raising all the pins so that the entire driver pin is inside the outer cylinder and the whole key pin is still within the inner cylinder. This position allows the inner cylinder to rotate, striking the releasing lever or catching the locking lever.

Usage: Pin locks are expensive, limiting their use to the middle and upper classes. They are normally larger than lever locks and so are unsuitable for jewelry boxes, small chests, and the like.

Security: The pins come in many different shapes and forms to confuse the thief and thus improve the lock's security: straight pins, mushroom pins, ball pins, reel pins, rounded pins, ridged pins, barrel pins, and many other types.

The use of shaped key pins imposes an Open Locks penalty of –8%, with an additional –2% penalty if a mixture of pin shapes is used. This difficulty reflects the chance of the pins becoming stuck within the lock, forcing a lock-picker to start over.

Another technique is to use multiple sets of pins, normally consisting of two sets positioned opposite each other in the lock. Both sets frequently bear the same combination, so the key may be inserted either way to open the lock. Three, four, or even five sets of pins can also be used; set in a half-circle spread around the lock or in a cross shape, they offer a marked improvement in the locks security. This method is termed *double* (or *triple*, or *quad*, or *quin*) *biting* and imposes a further –5% penalty for each set of pins beyond the first up to a maximum of –20% penalty for five sets.

Picking a pin lock can be accomplished with just a set of lock picks and a set of torque wrenches (or tension wrenches for sliding bolt varieties) for applying the turning power of a key.

The basic pin lock is fairly effective, imposing a base –10% penalty to any Open Locks attempt.

Hook Locks

The hook lock is one of the many designs born from necessity. People without the means to employ a locksmith build their own locks. The results are strange and often ineffective, although their uniqueness can be as much a bar as complexity.

The door is bolted using a bracketed bar that is impossible to shimmy. In the bar is a notch, and above the bar is a hole in the door. The trick is the key, which is a farming tool that can be easily carried over the shoulder by farmers and laborers without attracting suspicion. The key looks like a long, sickle-shaped pole threaded through the hole in the door to engage the notch in the bar. A simple twist slides the bar in or out of the locked position.

Usage: In most places, the ward lock has superseded the hook lock. The latter can rarely be found outside of small villages and other secluded areas. Mainly used for doors and gates, they have sometimes been scaled down for use in chests. Padlock versions do not exist.

Security: These locks are rare and simple: Their difficulty lies in their obscurity. Any thief who has never encountered a hook lock suffers a –15% Open Locks penalty to pick one, as thieves seldom carry the appropriate tools or else overestimate the lock's complexity. After overcoming or somehow giving the lock a rudimentary examination, a thief can easily update her tools to cope with hook locks, gaining a +50% bonus rather than a penalty to open the lock.

Combination Locks

Combination locks follow the same principles as other locks, except they don't require a key to open them. Instead, their combination is entered via a series of dials, switches, or buttons or else a single, freely rotating dial.

In a combination lock, a series of wheels (small discs) are either stacked into a lock and connected to a single dial, or else each wheel is connected to its own dial (as in a letter lock). Each wheel has a notch, known as a *gate*, in its rim. To open the lock, all of the gates must be aligned with the releasing lever that touches the rim of all the wheels.

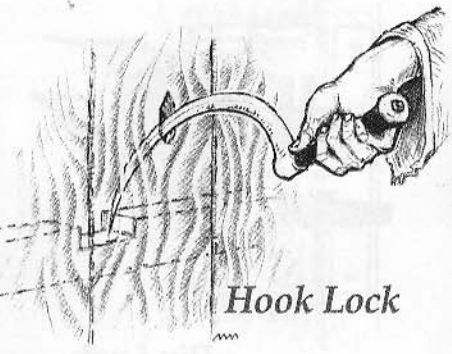
With a series of dials, the interaction between the dial and the wheel is clear, but with a single dial the wheels must be collected by alternating rotations of the dial. If the code is inaccurately entered all the wheels must be dislodged by a complete 360-degree clockwise or counter-clockwise turn of the dial.

Usage: This is the typical vault or safe lock, extremely expensive but almost guaranteed to be protecting something valuable or interesting. Royalty, wealthy merchants, and other powerful organizations are those rich enough both to buy the lock and to have something left to protect. Padlock varieties exist, but they are not of as high a quality as the normal combination lock.

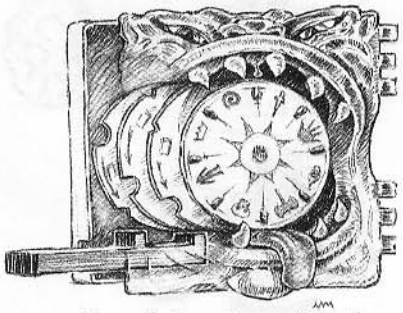
Security: These locks are rare and difficult to make, so they are nearly always of superior (–40% penalty) or masterful (–60% penalty) quality. Padlock versions usually lack false gates and so rarely exceed average workmanship.

To open a combination lock, different skills are required from the thief. It is an artform combining light fingers and acute hearing. The thief's base chance is determined by adding his Open Locks skill to his Detect Noise skill and dividing the result by two (rounding up).

Example: *Mufti the thief has Open Locks 70% and Detect Noise 39% (70 + 39 = 109 divided by 2 = 54.5 rounded up to 55), giving Mufti only a 55% chance to open the lock.*



Hook Lock



Combination Lock

The attempt can be made only in quiet to silent (but not magically *silenced*) conditions, as a thief must slowly rotate the dial (or dials) while listening for the releasing lever to click as it touches a gate. The thief can easily gauge the number of wheels; the skill lies in determining the position of each gate. Phantom gates, which are cut into the wheels like normal gates but are too small to be sufficient to open the lock, can fool a novice, but an expert lockpick can distinguish the difference.

Once the lock has been examined, a thief has a set of codes but does not know which code relates to which wheel. In other words, the thief doesn't know in what order to input the code. Proceeding with this code is a trial-and-error process that can be roleplayed or assumed to be part of the Open Locks skill roll.

Optional Rule: Due to the penalties of combination locks, a thief might opt to divide the job into each wheel, dividing the penalty equally among each wheel (rounding down). It is advised that, like the Hide in Shadows skill roll, the DM make these rolls in secret. The process of gauging how many wheels are in the lock is simple and automatically successful. One roll can then be made for each wheel, the DM supplying part of the code after each roll. If the thief fails one of these rolls, he unknowingly finds a false gate and is consequently given a wrong code. Highly skilled thieves might succeed with all the rolls, though most thieves will fail with at least one. The thief can then enter combinations or continue to search for gates. Each failure reveals a false code, and each success a true code, until they have all been supplied—in which case another success indicates that the thief feels he has found all the gates.

Mischievous DMs can use any roll over 95 to confuse the thief in some way, making him believe that he has found all the gates, perhaps. Likewise, any roll under 5 makes the thief absolutely positive that a gate lies on that number.

A thief can scrap everything and begin again, meaning that he restarts searching the lock, the DM rolling for success and resupplying the codes as before. This lets a thief verify one set of codes with the other, looking for irregularities to reduce the possibilities.

Entering a combination takes seconds (unless some delay systems are built into the lock), and the whole process should be meticulously timed by the DM if guards might arrive to discover the thief in the act. Just entering a combination requires only 6 seconds, while searching for one gate requires 1d4 rounds.

This is a realistic depiction, as a well-trained thief can eventually open nearly any combination lock—it's just that time runs out or frustration sets in before the job is complete.

Example: *Mufti, with his 55% chance to open a combination lock (half his Open Locks*

skill plus half his Detect Noise skill), is beset by a single dialed, combination vault lock. Calculating its quality (in this case superior, for a –40% penalty), Mufti is left with only a 15% chance of success and decides to split up the task. Dividing the penalty among the lock's three wheels (40 ÷ 3 = 13.333) leaves Mufti with a 42% chance on each wheel. Mufti sets to work. The DM takes up the dice and secretly rolls a 32 (success) and informs Mufti's player that he's sure there is a gate at position 9 on the dial. Continuing, the DM rolls a 52 (failure) and a 12 (success) telling the player the numbers 19 and 30. The lock's actual combination (determined beforehand) is 17, 30, 9, although the code can take the form of letters, symbols, or anything else the DM had devised.

Mufti starts testing some combinations, with Mufti's player listing each one to the DM. As time runs short, and without any success, Mufti feels unsure of his codes and decides to search for additional gates. The DM rolls again getting 54 (failure) and imparts the code 25. Mufti continues searching—the DM rolls a 4 (phenomenal success) and tells Mufti's player that he knows there is a gate at 17. Pushing his luck Mufti continues searching—a 10 (success) indicates there are no other gates, though Mufti cannot be sure that he is not mistaken. Feeling hopeful, Mufti starts testing combinations. He knows there are three wheels, and he has the collected the codes 9, 17 (positively part of the code), 19, 25, and 30. Unless frustration sets in, he will inevitably succeed.

Lock Variations

Ogre Ward Locks

Among the goblinoid races (orcs, goblins, and the like), ward locks are still popular. Ogres, in particular, have modified the basic design to incorporate their characteristic strengths.

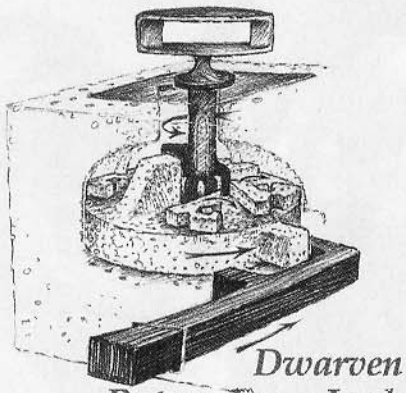
The ogre ward lock is huge by human standards and uses a solid metal key about the size and shape of a human leg (weighing around 120 lbs). The whole construct is made from assorted materials and, much to the despair of good warriors, most of these materials come from re-wrought platemail and other armors taken in battle.

The lock's mechanism remains simple (+25% bonus to lock picking rolls); the main problem is that, due to the lock's powerful springs and internal weights, a thief requires a crowbar and a minimum of a 17 Strength to turn the mechanism. This, to an ogre, is only a light wrist action, but it has served them well in warding off thieves of smaller races.

Dwarven Rotary Lever Locks

Dwarves are recognized as the designers of this variation, ever since they began crafting them entirely from stone. This lock is rare except in dwarven mines and imposes a further –5% penalty (on top of the penalty listed below) to any thief who tries to pick it.

The normal version is smaller than the stone variety but works the same way. The lock is cylindrical, and the levers are stacked horizontally in a star-shaped pattern at the back of the lock.



Dwarven Rotary Lever Lock

A spindle runs through the center of this pattern, locking into all of the lever's gates. Too much force breaks the spindle and destroys the lock. A barrel-shaped key (more of a claw-shaped key for the stone version) bears the lock's combination on its point, while a bump on the key's blade engages the lock's tumbler (letting the key turn the lock).

As with the lever lock, the levers must be depressed to form a bridge that allows the spindle to rotate freely and open the lock.

Dwarven rotary locks are bulky but more secure than the traditional lever lock, adding a further –8% penalty to Pick Locks attempts; it is normally produced with 10–14 levers (totaling –22% penalty), making it quite a formidable lock.

Lock Modifiers Summary

Lock	Modifier
Ward Lock	+25%
Ogre Ward Lock	Special
Lever Lock	
1–4 Levers	+10%
5–9 Levers	—
10–14 Levers	–15%
20+ Levers	–20%
Dwarven Rotary	–8%
Stone Dwarven Rotary	Special
Pin Lock	–10%
Shaped Pins	–8%
Mixed Shaped Pins	–10%
Double Bit	–5%
Triple Bit	–10%
Quad Bit	–15%
Quin Bit	–20%
Shifting Pin Lock	–40%
Hook Lock	Special
Combination Lock	Special
Buffering	Special

Shifting Pin Locks

This pin lock variation is difficult and time consuming to make but is virtually immune to key making attempts. At the border between the driver and the key pins, one of the pins bears a T-shaped bar while another has a T-shaped groove. The two pins slot together and, before the lock will open, the pins must be twisted to align the T-shaped bars with the rotation of the cylinder. This is accomplished by special cuts on the key that rotate (twist) the pins as it raises them to the shear line. When the key is removed, precise grooves within the lock return the key pins to their starting positions.

This is clearly a difficult process for a thief, imposing a –40% penalty, pushing it beyond the scope of low-level thieves.

Gordian Knot Locks

In strongly lawful areas, where theft is accountable with severe punishment (as in death), locks are rare and unessential. People in some of these areas tie up their door or gate with a piece of rope using a complex knot with a unique appearance that is known only to that family. Untying and retying the knot exactly the same way is impossible without that family's secret. Although this practice does not prevent unlawful entry, it does allow instant verification that a building has been burgled, perhaps reducing the time a thief has to escape.

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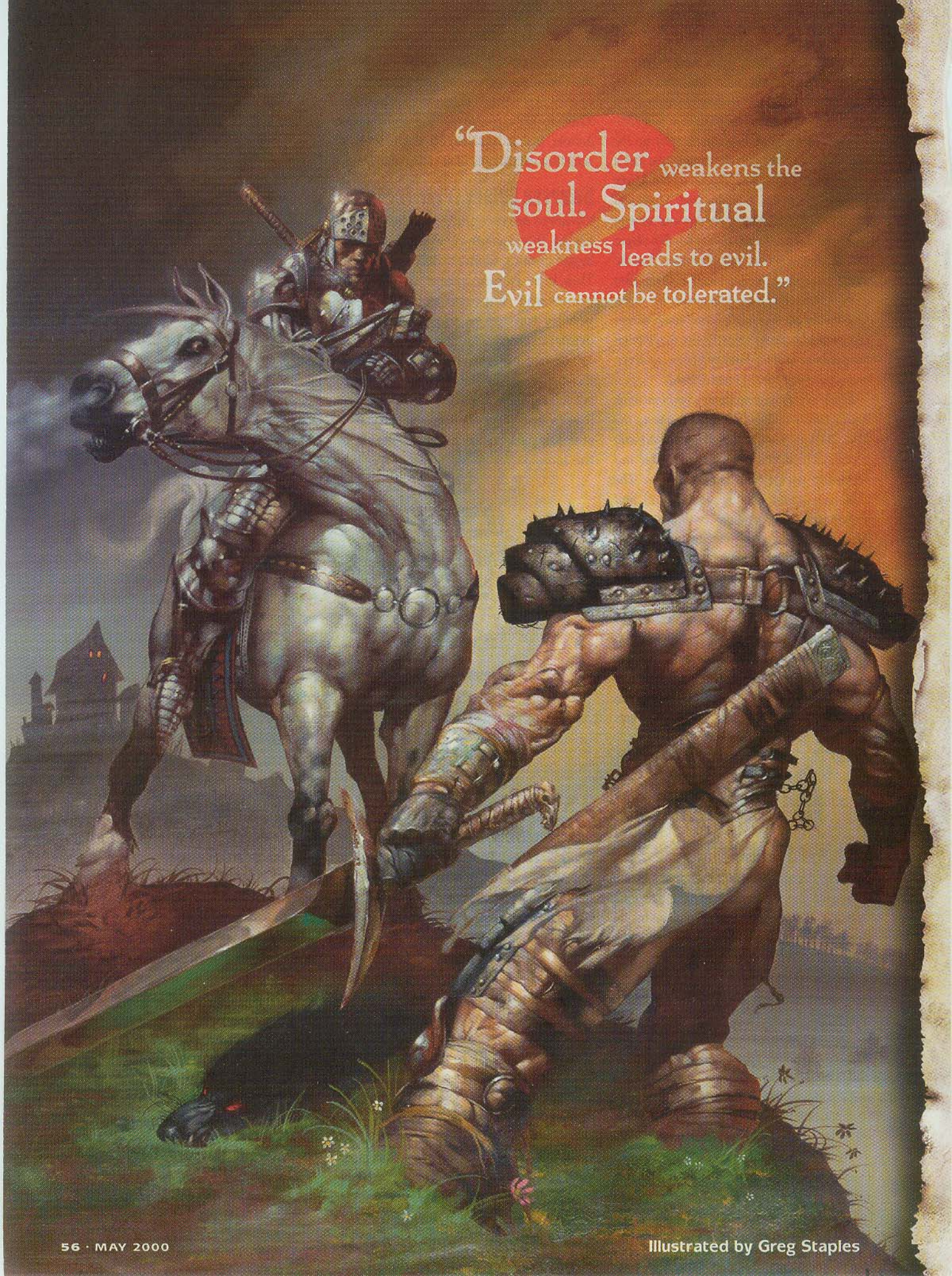

Illustrated by Greg Staples

Fiction by
Paul Kidd

BY THE JOB

The ranger flattened himself against a rock, panting.

Scorched and angry, he pressed himself against a boulder and listened for the slightest hint of sound. His scalp raged with pain, and the stink of burned hair filled his lungs. Armed with a big sword—black bladed, with a wolf-skull pommel and sharper than a razor—he slowly edged around the rock and hunted for sight of his foe.

It lay there grinning at him like a mad piranha—all teeth and wagging tail. The hell hound leaked smoke and flames between its teeth and watched the ranger with gleeful eyes.

"No hair. Funny!"

The ranger's helmet lay smoking on the ground back in the boulder field. His long hair had burned away to a stinking stubble, and his leather armor was in ruins. The hell hound lay where it could retreat from his sword, blasting flames as it ran off to ambush him yet again.

"Funny man mad! Funny funny!"

The hell hound's voice echoed somewhere in the ranger's skull. The open-cut coal mine gave the beast an infinity of hiding places, but the ranger was good at what he did. For years he had hunted alone deep inside the conquered lands, ambushing and slaughtering the minions of Iuz. He could strike from hiding, hit hard—

—and this damned dog was laughing at him as it fought!

A settlement clung to life above the mine—a little shantytown for refugees that had somehow survived the war. With the forests burned flat and the timber gone, the old coal mine was their only source of fuel. And now a hell hound had taken the place as its lair, using it as a base to raid chicken coops, livestock—even downing the village's one and only donkey. It set off traps for fun—burned hay stacks purely for the glee of it.

Either the hell hound or the village had to go.

The ranger had come down to fix the problem, and he found himself in trouble. The dog moved with uncanny speed. It avoided ambush, stayed out of range. It was like a big shaggy puppy playing with a toy. Dark, burned, black with coal dust, and annoyed, the ranger hissed as he cast about himself, pondering his next move.

The mine was a deep cleft gouged into a hillside. Coal lumps as big as wagons lay scattered in a maze among the slurry and the dust. The whole pace was pitch black, reeking of coal and tarry oil. A pool of water swam with vile colors as light reflected from the greasy scum on top. Two titanic iron rollers from an old coal-crushing machine lay rusting over to one side. Beneath them lay a long wooden chute that had once dumped coal into carts that served the mine.

The hell hound wriggled temptingly closer on its belly, announcing its move with a thump-thump-thumping of its tail.

"Funny bald man come get!"

The ranger cursed; the thing was actually having a good time! He risked a glance around his coal boulder and saw the big dog leaking steam from its mad-piranha grin.

A hell hound had only three flame blasts each day. The ranger was sure he remembered that. He reached carefully out and hefted a heavy, head-sized piece of coal and touched the burned stubble of his scalp in thought.

"Hey dog! If you want to eat, you have to get past me. This is the only way out of the mine."

"Hell hound eat coal!"

"Hell hounds eat coal." So much for that idea! "But you eat chickens too."

"Eat chicken. Chase chicken! Eat ee-ore donkey eat him up!" The hell hound wagged its tail. "Make straw bales burn and watch funny people run around! Fun!"

"Well, this time you pushed your luck too far!"

"No!"

The dog leapt with blinding speed. One instant it was lying there, the next it was on top of the ranger's boulder, grinning madly down. The man scythed his sword out in a blinding blur, then spoiled the blow as he saw the hell hound open up its jaws. He hurtled himself sideways as a vicious blast of flames sheeted down onto the coal. The ranger rolled wildly aside, the flames chasing him and making coal boulders blast apart. The hell hound made a gleeful noise as it set fifty square feet of coal on fire, the animal capering in joy.

"Burn! Burn!"

The ranger beat out the flames from his tunic.

"Son of a bitch!"

"Yes!"

BY THE JOB

The ranger scrabbled somewhere out of sight behind an outcrop of coal. Having the time of its life, the hell hound crept silently on its belly, closer and closer, then rose softly to its feet and peered around the outcrop.

There!

The ranger charged forward hard and fast, and the hell hound dodged away. It leapt and ricocheted from a cliff wall and came back at the ranger with teeth gaping wide. Flame thundered out like a dragon's breath, scything out to fold the ranger in a killing sheet of flame.

The flame blast stopped. The ranger had gone. Where he had stood, there was nothing but burning coal and glowing ash. A suit of leather armor burned sullenly on the ground. The hell hound lowered its tail and tilted its head from side to side in puzzlement.

"Where man?"

The move came from the hell hound's left, blindingly fast and powerful enough to decapitate a bull. The black blade seemed to burst up out of the ground itself. The dog yelped and hurled himself flat as an amoeba, the sword narrowly missing peeling him in two. Running like a hare, the dog sped off into the coal mine, while the ranger emerged from the ash.

He had taken off his cloak and armor, and threw them at the dog while he dove into a drift of slurry. The attack had almost worked. So far the day had cost him one head of hair, one cloak, and one set of armor. Fuming, the ranger stalked grimly forward, his muscles flexing as he hefted his sinister black sword.

Damn it! The ranger cast a healing spell into his burned head, feeling hair stubble let go and fall as the skin healed shut.

A crunch-crunch-crunching sound came from somewhere up ahead. If anything, it sounded like the hell hound eating coal. Nodding to himself, the ranger slid up onto the wooden walkway and climbed silently up to the giant iron rollers.

Even after years of inaction, the rollers seemed able to move. A grate led to a sealed hopper filled with coal dust as fine as talc. The ranger levered open the bin, hearing the awful rusty squeak echo through the gorge. He scooped up coal dust and let it fall, watching the fine dry powder floating on the breeze.

The hopper had been dwarf made, watertight and sturdy. The ranger stared at it and considered possibilities.

A clink and clatter of shifting coal betrayed the hell hound as it moved. The ranger remained perched like a gargoyle atop the giant hopper. He watched the hell hound as it crept warily out into the open.

"Hello, dog."

"Hello, funny man."

"No more flame. You ran out."

"Clever man!" The hell hound grinned merrily, its teeth like a slap-happy bear trap. "Poor hell hound. No more fire! Flame three times a day. Be good dog now!"

"Yep. That's a comfort." The ranger sat cross legged beside levers and controls. "So, dog. You eat coal."

"Eat coal. Coal yum! Charcoal yum. Brown coal not so yum. Paraffin give gas."

"Uh huh. So if that's what you like, why the chickens and the ee-ore donkey?"

The dog sat beneath the man and waggled its pointy ears.

"Fun! Hell hound, he run with pack. Big pack! Run long time—fight for bad men. Very bad. Hell hound he run away. He live here! Much coal! Much sleeping. Long sleeps—nothing to do. Then men come—steal hell hound's coal. But make wire house for chickens! Put grass in neat piles. Hell hound play! Burn! Fun! Burn!"

Great. A pyromaniac with delusions of humor. The ranger had fought the demons of Iuz for long years in the wilderness. He had lost friends, family, and teachers to monsters of every shape, grade, and form, but the hell hound was something new.

Keeping an eye on the strange dog, the ranger sat at ease.

"So you think burning is playing, hey?"

"Sometimes fun burn, sometimes bad burn! Hell hound chased by bad men. Hurt bad men! Burn! Hell hound chased by funny man—make game with funny man! Have good time! Good game. Hell hound smart."

The dog leapt high, jaws gaping as it jetted flame toward the ranger.

The hell hound watched him, grinning as it crept beneath the hopper and wagged its tail.

"Man funny."

The ranger leaned over the hopper to look at the dog. "Why?"

"Man dumb." The dog sat slyly at ease. "Hell hound know what man not know."

"Such as?"

"Coal make fire!"

The dog leapt high, jaws gaping as it jetted flame toward the ranger. The man was already spinning, his huge bulk deceptively light as he whirled and kicked at the lever atop the iron hopper. Doors beneath the hopper fell open with a bang, and a huge cloud of coal dust thundered down into the air.

Hell hound flame hit the coal dust just as the ranger flung himself face first down the wooden chute. An explosion ripped through the air, blasting apart the wooden trestles, iron struts, and hopper doors as coal dust detonated like a dozen fireballs. Wreckage flew as the mining equipment tumbled madly through the air. A massive iron roller plunged down into the loading chute, missing the ranger by an inch as he slid to safety and crashed into a pile of broken coal.

Coal burned, and dust pockets flashed and flared. Bald, with no armor and blood streaming from his nose, the ranger staggered out over the coal. The hell hound lay fifty yards from the ruined hopper bins, knocked silly and still grinning like a cod.

"Fun!"

The ranger knelt beside the thing and felt for a pulse beneath the fur. The hell hound's eyes rolled like marbles

"Big boom!"

"Big boom." The ranger sighed, actually glad as the hell hound rolled over on its side and looked him dazedly in the eye. "Hey dog, are you burned?"

"No burn." The dog had been knocked silly, but the fur seemed immune to fire. "Man clever. Good trick! Clever, clever man."

"Yep, clever."

"Hell hound fall—man fall! All even." The dog's tail thumped the ground like a hammer. "Do again!"

The ranger raised one scorched brown in appraisal.

"Really?"

"No. Tired now. Maybe rest a while! Man tough." The dog grinned. "No hair. Funny."

The ranger gave a sigh, planted his sword across his thighs, and dusted smoking cinders from the dog.

"You are the craziest damned thing I've ever found."

"Funny dog! Funny man! Make good team. Poor dog—dog lonely. Poor man. Man lonely. Dog play with man—fun times! Man take dog places—smell things! Find bunny! Burn bad things! Burn burn burn!"

"Well—maybe in a bit." The ranger's head was spinning. This hadn't been one of his better days. "All right. Here's the deal. You can make an arrangement here, or you can fight the villagers. What do you want?"

The dog lifted its head a little, then let it fall.

"Not want fight. Not funny."

"Right." The big man absently patted the hell hound on its damaged ribs. "So listen. Those people need those chickens. They need the donkeys and the grass piles. But the coal here is yours, so they should have asked before they took it. So you don't burn and eat their stuff. You leave them alone, and I'll make sure you get some fun in return for coal. Play games—fetch sticks. You can hunt bunnies or burn up bad monsters. Deal?"

The hell hound thought about it, then rolled over.

"Deal."

The ranger had one more healing spell. He cast it on the hell hound, then rose and dusted off his own filthy skin.

"You be good now."

"Man come back for fun?"

"Yep. Man come back for fun. First, man go heal third-degree burns and black lung."

"Bye bye, funny bald man."

"Bye, dog."

The little settlement had drawn attention. Tired, burned, and annoyed, the ranger sat on the grass, carefully tending to his immaculate black sword. The enchanted edge was honed as sharp as thought, quite capable of gouging stone or shattering lesser blades. Grim and weary, the ranger saw to his tools and waited for the end of yet another day.

Below the hills, the world was a blank ocean of grass. It was a landscape dead and drained. The demons of Iuz had surged across the land, killing everything in their path. The battle to hurtle the demons back had wiped out the last few motes of life left in the borderlands. Now, the insects were emerging warped into weird, grim shapes; abandoned, pathetic monsters tried to survive in a bleached wilderness. The peoples of the abandoned lands were broken, creeping things, shocked survivors lost in a wilderness of despair.

The lands had protectors once, protectors who had thrown themselves into a frenzied guerrilla war against the hordes of Iuz. The conquered lands had cost Iuz a terrifying toll. The evil demigod had turned on the enemy behind his lines, stripping his armies to wreak revenge on the parasites gnawing at his empire from within. The guerrillas had died in hundreds, then in tens and twos, until only the best were left. But they had finished the task they had set themselves: Iuz had turned his armies inward, and the armies of his enemies had been able to shatter him at last.

No gods had come to save the world from Iuz. It had been mortal men who fought and died, mortal men who faced the demons and drove them back across the bloody lands.

The wars were over. The guerrilla fighters were almost all dead and gone. There were no more raids to make, and no lands left to guard. No trails to follow—no revenge to take. Only emptiness, and the work no one else had survived to do. The big ranger sat in weariness, hunched and tired. Night fell across the whispering sea of grass, and the whole world seemed strange and empty.

The war had given him a mission, but it had taken even his name. Now, with Iuz gone, it should have been a world reborn. Instead, new kingdoms were arising, fighting one another in their eternal petty quest for power. The gods were merely callous children, lords and kings were hollow shells....

It seemed a world devoid of purpose.

The big ranger flexed his hands and looked across the empty world. Behind him, survivors moved in the shanties, cooking meals and trying to mend broken lives. Troubled, the man lay back on the ground and stared fiercely at the sky, wondering at the point of it all.

Down the village street came the clank of armor and the heavy tread of horse. The ranger rose and turned to look along the road.

An immaculate white warhorse strutted up the street, and on its back there sat a figure that gleamed like silver in the twilight. Plate armor, fine and burnished bright, clattered as the rider turned his head to look down at the ranger.

The newcomer had a thin, mild face made golden by a short blonde beard and golden hair. The man smiled in quiet camaraderie, his accent drawling, soft, and comforting.

"Sir, I believe we have not as yet met. I am Pedevar. Sir Pedevar. Paladin of Pelor, and most surely at your service."

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The holy symbol of Pelor, god of the sun, hung about the neck of the paladin. The man leaned down and proffered his open hand.

"I had heard you were here. A ranger is a rare, fine thing. A sure help in troubled times, and you have been of help, sir. They have told me of the monsters in the mines. A stirring thing, sir, to find a man still willing to help his fellows. Protect and serve, sir. We are of the same creed, I think you'll find."

The ranger rose, joints cracking. His bald head gleamed in the light.

"This is your town?"

"No sir, not in a sense that I made it with my hands. No, I have come, sir, to be of aid. My temple will come to these people, and bring them life. This is a good position, sir. A strong hillside. Coal for a forge, grazing for livestock. We can gather refugees from shattered lands here, fortify, and make it safe. Bring them safety and order. I believe that would be a service to them, would it not?"

The ranger shrugged. The settlement seemed to be doing very well for itself as it was. Grass elves, dwarves, a halfling family, and humans. Help seemed unnecessary.

"You're bringing in more people? Did you ask the locals? They don't have much food."

Sir Pedevar's soft accent made a soothing rhythm as he answered with a smile.

"The local people, sir, have little idea of the larger world. It is a place of evil. Safety comes in numbers, you will agree. A body acting in concert as one are many times stronger than the mere sum of their parts." The paladin paused, looking across the little shanty town as though seeing something fine.

"Yes, law and order, purpose and focus. I do believe nothing so afflicts a man as a lack of inner purpose."

The ranger looked away, troubled and diminished. He sheathed his sword and turned to go, only to have the paladin keep pace at his side.

"I believe I do not have the pleasure of your name, sir. As a colleague, I should be glad to know your name."

"Name...?"

The ranger frowned. Sometimes it almost seemed hard to remember. His name was pointless now. Those who had given it to him were gone, their bodies turned into undead servants of Iuz. The ranger had destroyed his stepparents himself, then ground their bones to powder with a rock. Mutilation of the dead came as second nature now, the only way to grant them peace.

Probing the sudden silence, Sir Pedevar inclined his head.

"Your name sir? Or shall I know you by your calling? Surely that is an honor to any man?"

The scarred, powerful ranger gave an uncaring shrug.

"Ranger. Ranger is enough."

"Then we shall see much of one another I am sure. Tomorrow at dawn my men arrive. We shall begin the works that is so needful. Peace and order, sir, peace and order." The mounted man turned his disdainful steed and tapped at the ranger's sword hilt with one armored boot.

"We shall train together, of course. I do so look forward to matching blades with you, sir. To hone skill, that vital skill. That skill we both so rely upon. I thank you kindly for agreeing to it."

The man spurred away, off to commandeer accommodations for the night. The ranger watched him go, flexing his sword hand slowly as he sifted images of the future.

A future, but no purpose.

His burns hurt. He needed new armor. Tomorrow he would scout the area around the settlement and make sure that it was clear. Reaching the end of an annoying day, the ranger spread out a threadbare blanket and lay down on the grass, staring balefully upward at the stars.

Here and there, the bleached bones of old Greyhawk jutted through the soil.

The dawn came flat and tasteless across the wilderness of grass. Here and there, the bleached bones of old Greyhawk jutted through the soil: burned farm houses, now green and moldering, a smelting furnace below the hill that now made a home for weeds.

The ranger ignored it all as he slipped quietly off along the one and only street. The sights of ruined hopes were old, old news.

Outside of the little village, there lay old, empty houses and ruined walls. The ranger walked past an abandoned forge, then stopped in annoyance as a flash of silver bruised the dawn.

Sir Pedevar the paladin sat on his horse talking quietly with a page and a dozen men-at-arms. The soldiers leaned on halberds or heavy bows while their sergeant listened to his lord. Each one wore a holy symbol of the god Pelor about his neck. The soldiers turned and marched uphill, the sounds of their boots and armor loud enough to wake the damned.

Pedevar's horse sensed the ranger and nodded its head. The ranger turned to go, but Pedevar turned and trotted his armored stallion clumsily over to the big man's side.

"Ranger! A most earnestly good morning to you. I see you are about the good work here today?"

With a dark, brooding stare at the men-at-arms, the ranger shrugged. He was eating hard bread, and the muscles of his jaws sent movements rippling across his new-shorn scalp.

"I'm working."

"You have decided, then, to think of service with Pelor?" The paladin's accents soothed and caressed. "We should so enjoy your company. There is so much threat of the demons returning. We of Pelor have great, great works to do."

Shrugging again, the ranger looked across the grass. He disliked the aura about the paladin; the man's presence seemed utterly belittling.

"The people here work hard. Not much food here for them. There used to be grass elves out this way. I'll see if there are survivors. Maybe they can trade."

The paladin nodded, smiling as though all the world saw fit to fall in with his plans

"A most excellent idea. Elves would be of benefit!"

"There's a hell hound in the mines. Tame. It won't trouble you."

"A hell hound!"

"Play with it once in a while." The big man turned. "If you're bringing in more people, then clear out the old well." The ranger jerked his chin toward a rusty shovel hidden among the spider webs. "Hard work. Take you two days."

He hoped the mere mention of work would make the paladin go away. It failed to happen. As the ranger marched out into the grass, Sir Pedevar made his huge horse keep pace, tread by heavy tread. The paladin cast a lofty, pitying glance at the shabby ranger and raised his brows.

"You wear no armor?"

"Lost it."

"No shield?"

"Can't march with a shield."

"No bow and arrows, sir? Surely a bow and arrows would be of service?"

"No." The ranger plodded on, his equipment pared down purely to the practical. "Arrows rattle in the quiver. No way of stopping it."

The paladin had a bow and arrows loudly clattering behind his saddle—the arrows inevitably fletched in white. Clad in rattling armor and mounted on a ton of steel-encrusted stallion, Sir Pedevar clearly thought the noise to be of little real account.

"I fear I must question your judgment, Ranger. Myself, I find a bow fills out my range of combat. I do so hope you won't be in trouble if you have to fight."

The big ranger turned, one hand resting upon the wolf-skull pommel of his sword.

"No trouble."

Sir Pedevar continued to ride beside the ranger. Behind the paladin came his page—a young man burdened with his master's spare lances, helm, and sword. All about them, the ruins of the old mining works gleamed with morning dew. Mines, equipment—and a population: The paladin seemed pleased with the nucleus of his own little empire and shared his vision with the ranger as he traveled.

"Order! The foundation of peace is security, and people feel secure when they are offered routine. There will be law here. There will be civic order. There will be peace."

The ranger gave a dark glance at Sir Pedevar.

"Law and order do not always mean peace."

The paladin answered with a troubled sigh.

"Perhaps, my friend, that is a simplification? Order is the means by which conflict is annulled. In a world of order, each knows his place, and so contentment is universal." The man looked out across the open plains, his armor gleaming in the sun. "We must fight for order. The demons cannot be allowed to invade us once again. We must stop them from weakening us from within." His eyes on the grass lands, Pedevar clenched one armored fist. "Yes. There are forces working against us, ranger. And we must be firm! The hand that wavers cannot be the hand that dispenses justice. Hard measures are in the end the only merciful ones. A small price paid now wins benefits through an eternity. I'm sure you will agree."

The ranger agreed nothing of the sort. He turned off the road and marched out into the wilderness, leaving Sir Pedevar behind. The paladin watched him go, and then turned about to begin his great and arduous work. The dust raised by columns of refugees already hovered on the horizon, and Sir Pedevar had much to do.

Alone in the emptiness, the ranger did the things that seemed necessary. He moved alone amid the breeze, wishing there was someone actually worth talking to.

No sound went unheard, no trails eluded him. The ranger had been the student of a consummate master. War had honed skills into a deadly edge. He searched carefully through the wilderness for two long days, living silent and alone just as he always had.

Just as he had done when his life had held a mission.

It was evening on the third day when he finally found them. The grass elves were dead, their bones bleaching. Wearily, the ranger took the hands from each skeleton and pounded them to fragments with a stone, denying necromancers the use of the pathetic dead.

No prayers. The gods were merely petty creatures given power. Better to let the dead rest without the gift of hypocrisy. The ranger slid his sword through his belt, the long blade balanced for a lightning draw, then turned his back upon the skeletons and walked away.

The emptiness became annoying. For some reason, the infinite emptiness seemed to be the perfect place for a man and his dog. A dog with a nose for fun, a voice to talk to, and coal red eyes....

The ranger lay staring at the stars through the middle of the night, then roused himself with an irritable curse. He walked back through long grass toward the hilltop village. Grasshoppers clattered eerily from his path as he trudged hard and fast through the wilderness, running ahead of him like heralds as he walked.

A dog's senses would have been a boon. A sharp nose and sharp ears could make all the difference in the gloom. The ranger kept returning to the thought as dawn lit the grass. He was thinking of it even as he caught the stink of carrion in the wind.

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The carrion flies were the only creatures who had prospered in the wars. Bone white, they were buzzing loudly, the sound obscene against the whispering grass. The ranger followed the sound until he found a trail in the grass.

A path had been beaten through the wilderness. Perhaps a hundred feet had trampled down the grass within the last two days, heading toward the old mining village. It was a road littered with filth, and with a scatter of six corpses lined up beside the verge.

Some were old, some were young. Perhaps a dozen dead had been left by the wayside where they had died of exhaustion. The bodies were worn thin with starvation and despair. Sitting on his haunches and pondering the dead, the ranger wondered what would bring such people to try walking here, out into the wilds.

One corpse lay with its hands cut off; this was the standard procedure in wartime, but it was the only mutilated body in the group. A rune had been cut into the corpse's forehead: the rune for thievery.

The ranger pondered the bodies, then looked along the trail toward the mining village miles ahead. The corpses set his senses prickling. A strange sensation crawled through him, like memories of battle. He took a grip upon his sword, holding the handle tight as he turned and walked along the trail.

He found the base of the hill and walked into the open cut coal mine. The place lay still and silent, with coal clinkers shifting and rattling in the breeze. Feeling a little silly, the big ranger squatted down, cleared his throat, and called into the dark.

"Hey, dog? Here dog!"

There was no answer. The ranger crept forward and tried a little louder.

"Hey, hell hound! What's your name? Hey dog?" He tried to think of an appropriate name. "Hey, Sparky! Lightning? Hey—hey, here Cinders!"

He found the beast at the center of the mine. It lay in a red ruin—its head cut off and stripped of its skin, shot to pieces with arrows. It had never even shot out a lick of flame—the ground about the corpse was utterly unscorched.

A broken arrow shaft lay on the coal nearby. An arrow shaft fletched in white.

The ranger stood slowly, anger flowing through him huge and dark.

He walked up the hillside to the village, moving in a haze as though even time had slowed.

The village now had a wall, a barricade made from the houses of the inhabitants. There was a gate, and at the gate, men-at-arms stood guard. A longbowman and a halberdier watched the ranger come up the hill. They fell back before him as he pushed the gate open with one huge shove and walked into the little village road.

The houses had gone, torn down to provide the village barricades. Three hundred miserable people lay huddled on the ground, sharing blankets as they tried to sleep. At the far end of the village, a silken marquis now stood: a makeshift temple to the sun god Pelor and his champion.

The village had only one other set of structures. A gibbet stood at the center of the wretched space, and a body swung pathetically from the nose. Beside it, a stake had been plunged into the ground, and draped from it was the hell hound's skin, its face still grinning its shark-toothed grin.

The two guards moved carefully away as the ranger walked to the gibbet. Other men-at-arms looked up from where they yawned and scratched. The ranger stood beneath the body of the hanged man and looked coldly up at him, his whole being crawling with loathing.

The hanged man dangled like a broken toy. Bulging eyes stared straight ahead. To the ranger's horror, a voice seemed to stir in the breeze.

"Crime! Crime does not pay! It does not pay!" The voice mewed pathetically, like a whipped child cringing for approval. "It—it does not pay ..."

A rune had been cut into the corpse's forehead: the rune for thievery.

The ranger turned slowly. The hell hound skin flapped in the breeze, tanned and preserved as a warning. The ranger walked up to it—and the hell hound somehow wagged its tail.

"Man ..."

"Dog." The ranger completed his turn. His stark, savage face made the men-at-arms freeze in place.

"Who did this?"

A soldier took a sharp step forward.

"They're not undead. It's soul binding! As a warning!"

"Who did this?"

Hunched at the foot of the gibbet, a figure stirred. A young man, bleak and hollow.

"The paladin did it. He did it as an example." The young man almost laughed. "We have to learn order."

The villagers stirred in helpless anger. The whole pleading mass of them turned eyes upon the ranger.

"They took us here as labor because we couldn't pay our temple tax!"

"They told us we can't leave. They said their temple owns us now!"

"The man stole bread. He was hungry. All he did was steal bread!"

Pealing smoothly across the cries of the villager, there came a languid, drawling voice.

"And he was punished!"

The paladin stood outside of his tent, his page tugging at the buckles of his armor. Sir Pedevar stood glaring at the ranger as his warhorse was brought to his side.

"Disorder. I cannot abide disorder. They are like a pack of rats—turning on one another. Disorder is a disease we must eradicate."

The ranger glared across an open corridor of ground toward the paladin.

"And the dog?"

"Evil is inherent. We cannot trust a hell hound."

"You killed it because you have it written on a list as being evil." The ranger motioned two villagers toward the gibbet.

"Cut him down."

"No." The paladin swung coldly up into his saddle. "The evil ones will stay just as they are."

Sir Pedevar rode toward the ranger, his warhorse so huge that it made the earth shudder as it trod. Dawn spilled light across the village, striking sparks from the paladin's silver armor. The man rested his bow across the pommel of his saddle.

"Disorder weakens the soul. Spiritual weakness leads to evil. Evil cannot be tolerated." The knight rode ponderously up beside the gibbet. Pedevar wrenched the hell hound skin off its pole and shook it in contempt.

"None of this is for us to judge. The gods define what is good and what is evil!" The hell hound skin growled impotently. Pedevar held the pelt as though it dripped disease. "Justice. This creature was an obstacle to good."

The ranger growled.

"That creature wanted only a few games and a piece of coal."

"Then see! Justice is done!" The paladin signed to one of his men, who tossed a chunk of coal up to his master's hand. Sir Pedevar mockingly jammed the coal into the hell hound's jaws and tossed the skin away like an unwanted rag. "That, ranger, is the justice of the temple. This! This place—this coal, these serfs! This is strength. These people will mine coal, and it will be sent to the temple to make us strong! Strength opposes evil! Raw power is all that keeps evil at bay. My god demands that strength! My god has a right to that strength!"

The paladin gave a dismissive jerk of his head toward the ranger.

"Doubt leads to evil. He is already on the path." Pedevar wiped his hands clean. "Kill him."

Three men-at-arms shoved villagers aside and moved toward the ranger. The ranger's black sword cleared its sheath in an invisible blur. An instant later, a man-at-arms hunched screaming, the sword blade through his guts and blood spraying through the air. Another soldier gave a roar and thrust his halberd at the ranger's back. The big ranger ripped the sword from his first victim. An instant later, the second man-at-arms staggered, the black sword hacking through his ribs, then thighs, then head, shearing the soldier almost clean in two.

The black sword sounded like a meat ax as it worked. Vast and savage, the ranger roared. An enormous fury thundered into him. A man-at-arms ran toward him. The ranger spun past the soldier's lunge, his sword decapitating the enemy in a blur as the man passed.

Villagers scattered and screamed. Men-at-arms opened fire with bows, hitting villagers as they tried to flee and hide. The paladin's horse reared, and the man nocked and drew, aiming at the ranger's heart. The bow twanged, and a pure white arrow hissed lethally toward the mark.

The ranger stood between two halberdiers. The men hacked their clumsy weapons down. One man screamed as the black blade sheared off his fingers. The paladin's arrow hissed as it flew. Whirling, the ranger flicked up his sword, sliced the arrow, and sent it spinning harmlessly aside. The sword hammered back down, shearing through a halberd staff and laying a man's face open to the bone. The big ranger punched his sword hilt at the open wound, making his victim scream and fall away.

The soldiers fled. Roaring, the ranger cut the legs out from a man-at-arms as he ran, pinning the man to the earth with a vicious downward stab.

Sir Pedevar cursed and threw aside his bow. The page held a heavy lance for his master. The paladin snatched the weapon, leveled it, and spurred his massive horse straight toward the ranger's back.

The ranger turned and shot out a spell, and grass writhed from the ground to snare the horse's legs. Armor, stallion, knight, and lance came crashing to the ground in an avalanche of steel. The paladin screamed as he fell with bone-crushing force, armor and weapons flailing about him. Beside him, the discarded hell hound lay like a doll, its red eyes gleaming mockery at the man as he spat the dust out of his mouth. The hell hound held its coal between its teeth and gleefully wagged its tail.

The paladin swayed to his feet, one arm hanging broken at his side. He shoved a hand against the wound, magic flashing as it healed. He served the whims of a god in the name of good, and the god gave his servant power. Snarling, Sir Pedevar watched the ranger slowly walking toward him and briskly drew his sword.

"Rangers. What are you? Just guardians. Nothing more!" The paladin's armor hung in disarray, straps broken by the fall. "What? Do you think you're fighting for justice? Justice is for gods and kings to decide! We are only men. Just men!" The paladin snapped his battered shield up into guard, his long sword cocked back over his shoulder as the ranger steadily marched toward him. "Who appointed you? Who sent you here as judge? What authority turned you into a justicar?"

The big ranger lifted his black sword and jerked his chin toward the terrified refugees.

"Theirs."

The black sword crashed two-handed against the paladin, the blow huge enough to spray sparks and lift the paladin clear off his feet. The knight dove and rolled, his own blade meeting the ranger's in a scream of magic steel. He punched with his shield. The ranger blocked the blow, then Pedevar's head snapped backward as the ranger smashed a fist right into his face.

The paladin gave a roar and wove his sword into a brilliant web, the blade crashing against the ranger's weapon in a thunder of rage. The black sword was everywhere—fast and fluid,

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merely parrying. Thrashing forward in his clumsy armor, the paladin felt his shield suddenly kicked out of his grasp. He took his longsword in two hands and fought like a maniac, following the ranger as he backed carefully away in a circle.

The big ranger parried, his sword moving fast and efficient to catch each incoming attack. Pedevar's armor clattered, and the sheer weight of it was tiring the paladin to death, slowing him a fraction of a second with each swing. The ranger poised and waited—faked an opening, then turned in a blur as the paladin made a savage lunge. He caught the silver sword between his own blade and his crashing fist, hammering the paladin's sword clean out of his grasp. The ranger roared and punched his sword hilt against the other man's skull, and the paladin fell sprawling in the dirt.

Panting, the ranger rolled Sir Pedevar over with his boot to shove his sword point against the paladin's throat. The paladin glared up at him in absolute, all consuming hate.

Suddenly an arrow struck the ranger from behind. He spun aside, crashing to the ground. Behind him, Sir Pedevar's page grinned at his master, lowering his master's bow.

Pedevar surged to his feet, snatching up his sword. The ranger rolled on the ground, reaching for his own blade. Pedevar kicked the weapon away, then walked around the ranger. He viciously kicked the arrow in the man's side, spinning the ranger around in the dirt.

Villagers cringed. The paladin held up his sword above the fallen ranger, and crowed in victory.

"Here is justice! Justice of the strong! Justice of might!" The paladin gave a triumphant turn, taking a headsman's grip upon his sword. "No one has anything to say before sentence is passed?"

"Yes."

The voice came from mere feet away. Sir Pedevar whipped around to see the hell hound skin lying in the dirt with its mad piranha grin.

"Hi!"

Flame shot from the hell hound's mouth, engulfing the paladin's face. Pedevar spun, screaming in agony, his hair in flames and blinded by fire. Behind him, the ranger ripped the arrow from his side and hammered a healing spell into his flesh. The big man rose snarling, hunting for Sir Pedevar's page. The boy backed away, threw down his bow, and fled in terror from the hill.

Pedevar reeled. Blinded and smoldering, he groped for his own face and covered his eyes in healing hands. Burned flesh knitted, and the man shook his head and roared in anger, looking for his enemy.

The ranger killed Pedevar with a single, savage blow. The black blade sheared through the holy symbol of Pelor—through breastplate, flesh, bone, and spine. Driven by massive anger, the black sword erupted out through the paladin's back plate, sending the paladin's cloven corpse crashing to the ground.

The ranger snarled, annoyed, and planted a hand against his back. The page's arrow had gone clean through his ribs, and the damned wound still bled. The ranger spared a kick for Pedevar's corpse, dragging the holy symbol away from the man before he stopped to lift the hell hound up out of the dirt.

"Thanks."

"Fun!" The hell hound grinned, its long tail wagging. "Bad man burn. Burn good!"

"Yep." The ranger probed at his own wound, decided it would wait until his spells rejuvenated, and painfully sheathed his sword. He dusted the hell hound clean; the lustrous black fur seeming to glow like liquid night beneath his hands.

"You're alive in there?"

"Live! Eat coal. Make fire. Sniff with nose." The dog's teeth gleamed. "Funny man kill good! Take hell hound—be friend. We burn more bad men! Burn! Burn!"

"Yes. We will." The ranger held the hell hound up and looked into its glittering red eyes. "All right then. Come along, Cinders."

"Fun!"

> "Here is justice! Justice of the strong! Justice of might!"

Villagers were creeping out into the light, staring in awe at the dead soldiers, the dead paladin—and the big ranger with his hell hound skin. The ranger draped the skin across his head and tied its forelegs in place for safe keeping. He took one long look at the cloven holy symbol of Pelor—then dropped it about his neck as a permanent reminder of the job to be done.

He turned to go. The ranger marched past the dead men-at-arms, watched by villagers. As he passed the last few, the young man who had sat beside the gibbet ran a few steps after him.

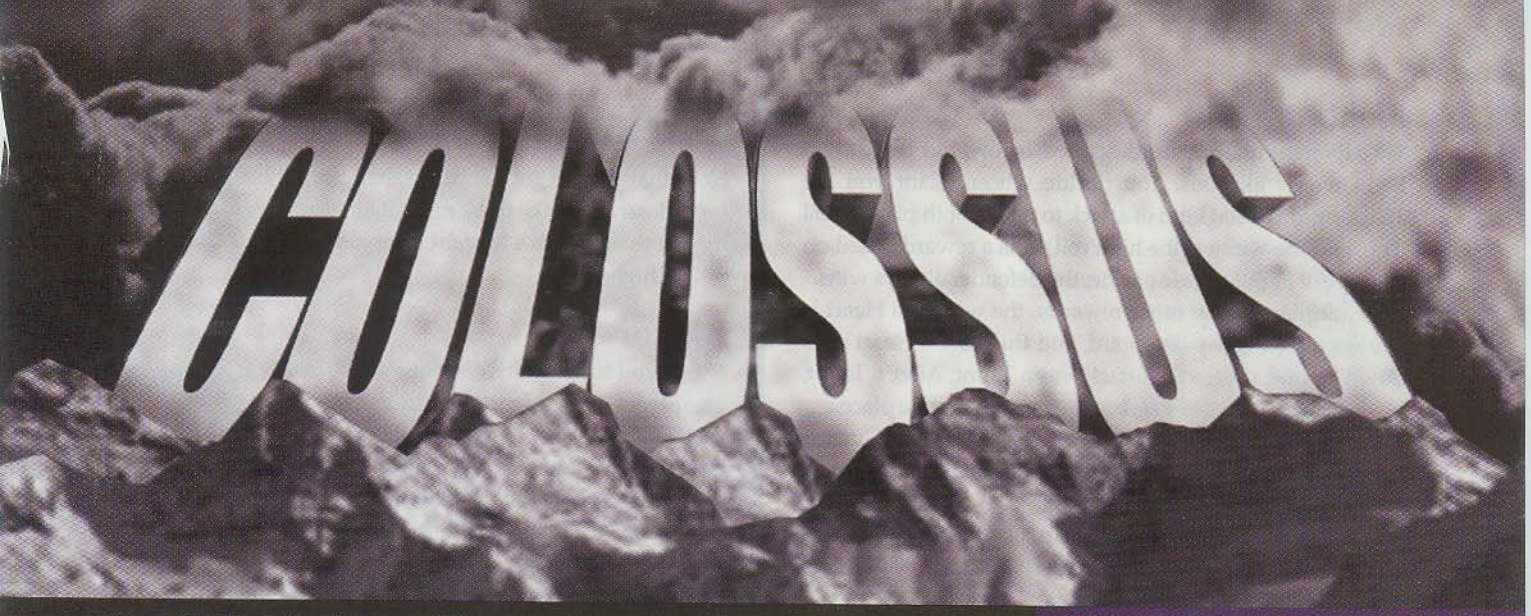
"Sir! Hey—hey, what's your name?" The young man faltered, fearing to come too close. "I … I mean, do you have a name? Or—or do we call you by the job?"

"By the job."

The big man stood at the edge of the hillside. The ruined lands stretched from horizon to horizon. Petty warlords were already spreading out into the wilderness. Suddenly there seemed an endless task to do. Looking once back at the village, the Justicar laid a hand upon the young man's shoulder, then turned to go.

"By the job will do."

For more of the adventures of Cinders and the Justicar, read Paul Kidd's GREYHAWK® *novels:* White Plume Mountain *and the recently released* Descent Into the Depths of the Earth, *both based on the classic D&D® adventure modules.*



Hey, Kids! Let's build monsters and make 'em fight.

By James Ernest

Illustrated by Monte Moore

In *Colossus*, each player is a mad scientist building some sort of creature. Perhaps it's a stone golem, perhaps it's a wicker man, perhaps it's a plain old laser-shootin' butt-kickin giant robot. Whatever the details, you're building them, and you like to make them fight. For clarity in these rules, all your creatures will be called "giants."

The Game

Each player builds one Giant, represented by six areas on the accompanying illustrations (or six lines on a sheet of paper). The top area is the Giant's Head. The second two are its Arms. Below those is one area for the Giant's Heart, followed by two more for its Legs. Each of these lines can contain a value from 0 to 8. Your Heart begins with a value of 4; all the other parts begin with a value of zero. The object of the game is to raise all of your Giant's lines to a value of 6 or more.

You will be tracking numbers in this game as if you had a lot of 8-sided dice. To represent that your Heart is a 4, for example, simply set an 8-sided die on your Heart Line with a 4 on top. If you don't have a lot of dice, you can track your Giant's values with pencil or pen instead.

To Begin

Determine randomly who will go first. Turns proceed to the left. On each turn, a player will do one of the following: **Research**, **Development**, or **Fighting**. If there are no dice in the Pool of Knowledge, as there are on the first turn, you must take a Research turn. Otherwise, you can take any kind of turn you choose.

Research

If you decide to perform Research, roll five 8-sided dice in the middle of the table. These dice are the "Pool of Knowledge," and they represent the products of your research. If there are any dice in the Pool before you roll, they are replaced by the new dice.

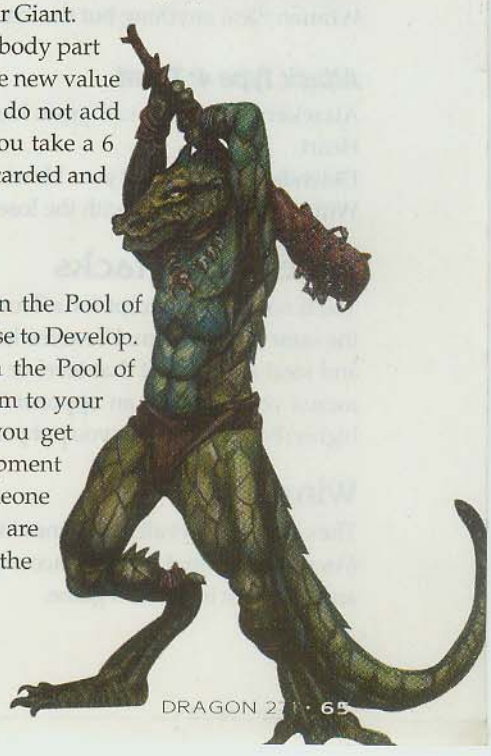
Players: 4 to 8
Playing Time: 10-30 Minutes.
Equipment: Pencil and paper, six 6-sided dice, at least five 8-sided dice.

After rolling, you may take one of the dice out of the pool and attach it to any body part on your Giant. To "attach" a number to your Giant, you are supposed to take the actual die out of the pool and set it on your Giant. Again, if you have a lot of 8-sided dice, go ahead and use this method. If you are limited on dice, just take the die temporarily out of play, and write the appropriate number on your Giant.

If you attach the die to a body part that already had a value, the new value replaces the old one. They do not add together. For example, if you take a 6 and replace a 4, the 4 is discarded and the body part becomes a 6.

Development

If there are already dice in the Pool of Knowledge, you may choose to Develop. Take up to two dice from the Pool of Knowledge and attach them to your Giant. You'll notice that you get more parts from a Development turn (stealing from someone else's research), but they are not necessarily going to be the best numbers.



Fighting

The different attacks are described below, but basically a Fight works like this: You decide whose Giant you are attacking and what kind of attack to make. Both players roll dice, and the winner (the high roll) gets a reward based on the type of Fight. In case of a tie, the defender always wins.

In addition to any other rewards, the winner's Heart is always increased by one point, and the loser's Heart goes down by one, unless the attack was a Taunt. After a Taunt, neither Heart changes size, but they might change places.

If a Giant's Heart value ever reaches zero, that Giant is destroyed. Its owner immediately starts a new Giant with a Heart of 4 and zeroes everywhere else.

Fighting uses 6-sided dice to help distinguish the combat dice from the research dice, which is harder than you might think.

"Stealing" a Body Part

Usually, the winner of a Fight gets to "steal" a part from the loser, actually taking a die off the losing Giant. This means the loser's value for that part goes to zero, and the winner has the option to replace any of his parts with that value or throw it away. Exception: You can never steal a Heart, and you can never use a stolen body part to replace your Heart.

Attack Type 1: Head Smash

Attacker: Roll 1d6, and add the value of your Head.
Defender: Roll 2d6.
Winner: Steal the loser's Head, if you want to.

Attack Type 2: Punch

Attacker: Roll 1d6, and add the values of your Arms.
Defender: Roll 3d6.
Winner: Steal one Arm or the Head from the loser.

Attack Type 3: Kick

Attacker: Roll 1d6, and add the values of your Legs.
Defender: Roll 3d6.
Winner: Steal anything but the loser's Heart.

Attack Type 4: Taunt

Attacker: Roll 1d6, add your Head, and subtract your Heart.
Defender: Roll 1d6, add your Heart, and subtract your Head.
Winner: Swap Hearts with the loser, if you want to.

Notes on Attacks

You'll notice that, except for a Taunt, all the Attacks follow the same basic pattern: Use some level of your Giant's body, and steal anything at that level or above. Using your Legs means you can steal an opponent's Legs (and everything higher) but it also means you put your Legs at risk if you lose.

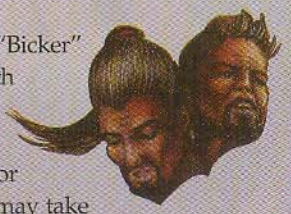
Winning

The object is to get all of the lines in your Giant to a value of 6 or more. The first player to accomplish this wins the game and goes first in the next game.

Mutant Rules

Now that you've got the basics, here's a set of Mutant rules for Colossus. Each of these new Giant types has a special ability. But to win with a Mutant, every line on your Giant must be 7 or higher.

Bicker



The Two-Headed Giant (called the "Bicker" because of its tendency to argue with itself) has an extra Head line. Along with making great Head Smash attacks, its owner is allowed to roll 5, 6, or even 7 dice for his Research turn and may take the lowest die in the Pool every time it participates in a Fight.

The Bicker's Head Smash: Add both your Giant's Heads, and roll no dice. When a Bicker loses a Head Smash, it loses only one Head.

Shrunk

The Heartless Giant is called the Shrunk. It simply has no Heart and is otherwise normal.

Grok

The Grok is a scavenger. If he takes a Fight turn, he can begin by stealing the smallest number out of the Pool of Knowledge. However, he can't do this if there is only one number left, and he can't use this number to replace his Heart. In addition, whenever there is a Grok in the game, any non-zero body part that gets replaced falls back into the Pool of Knowledge but can be taken only by a Grok. For example, if a player uses a 6 to replace a 4, the 4 falls back into the Pool instead of leaving the game. (These dice do get replaced when someone takes a Research turn.)

Llama

The Llama has four Legs and no Arms. It can not Punch or be Punched. Its normal Kick uses any two Legs of your choice. In addition, it has an extra Kick attack called the "Jump" in which it rolls no dice but adds all four Legs against the defender's 6d6.

Shift

The Shift is a shapeshifter that can spend one turn rearranging all of its body parts, including its Heart. If it does so, it can do nothing else that turn.

Two mutant types can be combined (for example, a Shift Bicker or a Grok Llama), but this kind of Giant must have an 8 in each body part to win the game.

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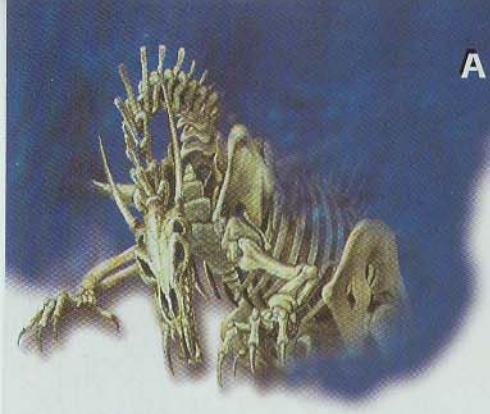


Spells of Defense

From the library of Aaldric Talzon, these spells are sure to help your mage live a longer, happier life.

by
Owen K.C. Stephens

illustrated by
Carlo Arellano

SPELLS DESIGNED TO PROTECT THEIR CASTERS from harm are among the most common low-level dweomers. Unable to wear heavy and constrictive armors or to trust in their own natural fortitude and agility to protect themselves, wizards have developed an impressive range of magics to safeguard them in an often-hostile world. Specialist wizards in particular have shown great ingenuity in researching defensive spells in their own schools, even when those schools do not lend themselves well to the task.

Many of these spells are designed by adventuring wizards for their personal use and, thus, never become widely available. Others are designed to protect a wizard from specific circumstances and are far too limited in scope to gain widespread acceptance. Countless spells of unique design must have been lost over the ages when their original inventors died.

Slowly, however, some of those spells are being recovered and distributed to prevent their loss. In particular, Aaldric Talzon, a member of the Watch-Wizards Guild of Waterdeep, has undertaken to collect as many protective spells as possible. A naturally peaceful man, Aaldric began collecting defensive magic early in his career. It is rumored that Aaldric lost a friend in a wizard's duel, and his grief drove him to join the Guild and seek out every possible magic protection. Those who have gotten to know the friendly and affable mage doubt that such a tragedy lurks behind his easy-going demeanor, but it is certainly true that Aaldric is obsessed with his collection of defenses.

Although Aaldric's duty to the Watch-Wizards Guild prevents him from traveling in search of new spells, he has great luck trading low-level defensive spells with those respectable spellcasters who come through Waterdeep. He has even been known to undertake spell research for adventurers who need an unusual defensive spell, although this is rare. As befitting his status as a Watch-Wizard, Aaldric refuses to do business or trade with wizards who have questionable morals or who are troublemakers.

Aaldric has begun compiling all his defensive spells into a collection of tomes called the *Aegis Manuals*. The first of these is complete, containing 1st- through 3rd-level spells.

Aegis Manual I

This small, slim book is the first in what Aaldric Talzon hopes to be a series of defensive spellbooks. It is 6 inches high, 4 inches wide, and 2 inches thick. The

front cover is carved ivory with Aaldric Talzon's *wizard mark* (a shield with two staves crossed behind it) in the center. Leather straps connect this to the book's back cover, a thin slab of unpolished basalt. The pages of the *Manual* are delicate sheets of hammered silver trimmed in gold. Aaldric has placed powerful magics on the *Aegis Manual*, so it makes saving throws as strong metal. Copies of the book might well exist that lack this enchantment.

The spellbook contains several common spells Aaldric has found useful, including *armor, protection from evil, shield, blur, mirror image, blink* (all from the *Player's Handbook*), *protection from paralysis, spirit armor* (both from the *Tome of Magic*), and *displace self* (from *PLAYER'S OPTION®: Spells & Magic*). It also includes a number of very rare or unique spells Aaldric has gathered over the years. All of these are detailed below.

Clayskin

(Alteration)
Level: 1
Range: 0
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 1
Duration: 24 hours
Area of Effect: The caster
Saving Throw: None

This spell is in many ways a lesser form of *stoneskin*, granting the caster extensive protection against cuts, blows, and projectiles. Normal weapons, missiles, and unarmed attacks cannot harm a wizard protected by *clayskin*. Unlike *stoneskin*, *clayskin* protects the caster only against mundane attacks and is ineffective against magical and giant-sized weapons, including siege weapons. This spell does not absorb falling damage.

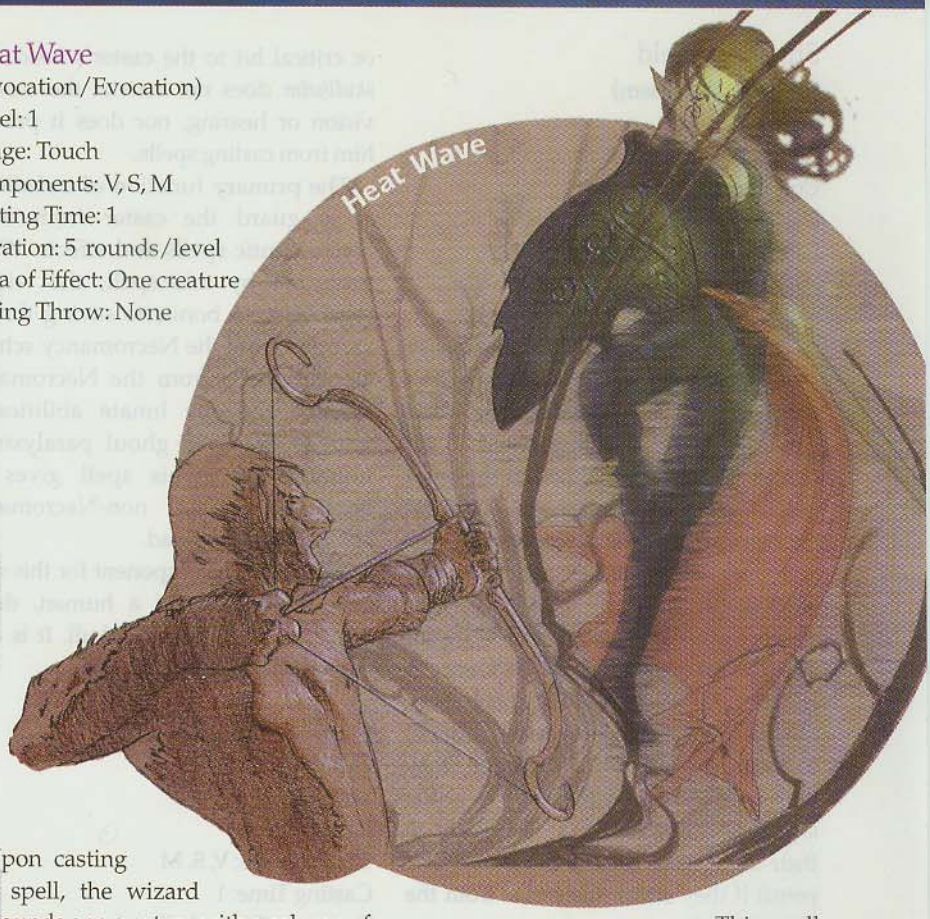
Clayskin defends the caster against 1–4 successful attacks. Attacks that miss the caster don't count against this number, but any damaging attack, even those against which this spell does not protect, removes one use of *clayskin*.

It is impossible to have both a *clayskin* and a *stoneskin*, or multiple *clayskins*, in effect at the same time. The second spell cast always fails.

The material component for this spell is a small ball of clay and quartz dust. It is consumed in the casting.

Heat Wave

(Invocation/Evocation)
Level: 1
Range: Touch
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 1
Duration: 5 rounds/level
Area of Effect: One creature
Saving Throw: None



Upon casting this spell, the wizard surrounds one creature with a column of hot air and rippling heat waves. Although the heat does not harm the spell's recipient, it does distort her image. This distortion is not strong enough to confuse creatures that attack the recipient in melee, but opponents suffer a –3 penalty to attack the target with missile weapons.

Additionally, the heat wave keeps the target quite warm, protecting her from extreme cold. A creature within a heat wave can function comfortably in temperatures as low as 20° F. The target also receives a +2 bonus to saving throws vs. ice- or cold-based magical attacks.

The material components for this spell are a piece of charcoal, a small paper fan, and a bit of sulphur. All are consumed when casting the spell.

Innocent Bearing

(Charm)
Level: 1
Range: 0
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 1
Duration: 1 round/level
Area of Effect: 30 ft. radius
Saving Throw: Negates

This spell causes everyone within 30 feet of the caster to believe that the mage is innocent and incapable of causing trouble. This spell remains centered on the caster, and its area of effect moves with him. Creatures affected by this spell treat the caster as if he were a child. Guards are unlikely to allow the caster into a secured area but believe he is simply lost or confused. In combat, attackers choose any other target over the caster, not believing him to be a threat.

Whenever a creature enters the spell's area of effect, it is allowed a saving throw to resist this spell. If a creature enters and leaves the area several times during the spell's duration, it is granted a new saving throw each time. Once a creature has made a successful saving throw, it remains immune to the spell, even if it leaves and re-enters the area. If the caster attacks a creature, that creature is immediately released from the spell's power.

This spell's material components are a lock of a child's hair and a small ribbon or piece of lace. Both are consumed when casting the spell.

Shadow Shield

(Illusion/Phantasm)
Level: 1
Range: 0
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1
Duration: 3 rounds/level
Area of Effect: The caster
Saving Throw: Special

This spell is a specialized, illusionary shield composed of material drawn from the Demiplane of Shadow. The *shield* conforms in style and appearance to the desires of the caster, although it cannot exactly mimic an actual shield. The *shield* does not restrict the caster in any way and does not limit her ability to cast other spells.

Although the *shadow shield* is insubstantial and does not grant the caster an AC bonus, creatures striking it believe the *shield* is real and expect their attacks to meet considerable resistance. Thus, they pull back from their blows at the last instant and suffer a –2 penalty to their damage rolls (to a minimum of 1 point) if they attack the caster from the front or flank.

An intelligent creature who knows that the caster is a wizard (such as through past experiences or by seeing the wizard cast other spells) can immediately make a saving throw vs. spell to realize the *shadow shield* is not real. Additionally, the first time any creature strikes the *shield* with a melee weapon, that creature can make a saving throw to discover the *shield's* illusionary nature. Any creature that makes its saving throw no longer suffers the penalty to damage rolls.

Obviously, a *shadow shield* is of no use against traps, landslides, spells, or any other unintelligent damaging effect.

Skullhelm

(Necromancy)
Level: 1
Range: 0
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 1
Duration: 24 hours
Area of Effect: The caster
Saving Throw: None

This spell forms a mystic helm in the form of a large skull around the head of the caster. This protects the wizard by negating the first successful called shot or critical hit to the caster's head. The *skullhelm* does not restrict the caster's vision or hearing, nor does it prevent him from casting spells.

The primary function of a *skullhelm* is to guard the caster from other Necromantic spells and effects. While protected by this spell, the wizard receives a +1 bonus to saving throws vs. spell from the Necromancy school, clerical spells from the Necromantic sphere, and the innate abilities of undead (such as ghoul paralysis or mummy rot). This spell gives no bonuses against non-Necromantic spells cast by undead.

The material component for this spell is a small piece of a human, demihuman, or humanoid's skull. It is consumed when casting this spell.

Wild Swing

(Alteration)
Level: 1
Range: 0
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 1
Duration: 2 rounds/level
Area of Effect: The caster
Saving Throw: Special

This spell creates a field of wild magic around the caster, warping space in small but unpredictable ways. Although this warp effect makes the caster appear to waver (as if seen through a warped lens), it does not actually displace her or grant her an AC bonus. It does, however, make the caster more difficult to hit solidly with a well-placed blow.

Any creature successfully hitting a wizard protected by a *wild swing* must make a saving throw vs. spell. Success indicates that the attack occurs normally. If the saving throw fails, the attacker only connects with a glancing blow. This prevents the attacker from adding any bonuses to damage from specialization, weapon mastery, Strength, or any other source; only the weapon's base damage is rolled. In the case of monsters whose attacks are not rated with damage bonuses, a glancing blow inflicts one less point of damage per die (to a minimum of 1 point).

The material components for this spell are five drops of wine and a small spinning toy top. The wine is consumed when the spell is cast, but the top can be reused.

This spell is restricted to wild mages and dimension specialists.

Vapor Guard

(Invocation/Evocation)
Level: 1
Range: 0
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1
Duration: 2 rounds/level
Area of Effect: Special
Saving Throw: None

This spell creates a shieldlike barrier of solid, swirling fog 3 feet in diameter. This barrier can be moved by the caster, held in one of her hands like a shield, or left in midair. Vapors and gasses of mundane or magical nature cannot penetrate a *vapor guard*, and physical objects have difficulty doing so.

The *vapor guard* has several possible uses, depending on how it is employed. If the wizard holds the barrier like a shield, she gains an AC bonus of –1 against one attack from the front or flank. If the wizard does nothing but attempt to block a moving vapor or mist-like spell with the *guard*, she can protect an area up to 10 feet square. If the caster leaves the barrier to block off an area, it requires a Bend Bars/Lift Gates roll to move it. Creatures trying to pass through the *vapor guard* are held there for 1 round, during which time they are *slowed* (as the spell). Other uses for a *vapor guard* might be possible, at the discretion of the DM.

Bone Block

(Necromancy)
Level: 2
Range: 0
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 2
Duration: 1 round/level
Area of Effect: The caster
Saving Throw: None

This spell causes a pair of skeletal arms to sprout from the caster's sides. The undead appendages work to defend the caster, attempting to parry attacks made against him. The skeletal arms' parrying efforts grant the caster an AC bonus of –1 for every two levels

of the wizard. The arms can only parry melee attacks made from the front of the caster. They are ineffective against all ranged attacks, spell attacks, and any attack made from the flank or rear of the caster.

If the arms are attacked directly (requiring a called shot), they each have AC 6 and 2 hit points per level of the wizard. If one arm is destroyed, the wizard's AC bonus decreases to –1 per four levels of the caster. If both arms are destroyed, the spell ends.

The material components for this spell are two fingerbones from a dead fighter. They are consumed in the casting.

Dancing Shield

(Conjuration)
Level: 2
Range: 0
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 2
Duration: 2 rounds/level
Area of Effect: Caster
Saving Throw: None

This spell creates a magical shield of force that hovers around the wizard. This shield moves to interpose itself between the wizard and the first physical attack made against her each round. The shield is effective against all weapon attacks, unarmed melee attacks, claws, stingers, and spells that simulate weapons (such as *spiritual hammer, flame arrow,* and *Mordenkainen's sword*), but only attempts to block the first such attack in any given round. Even an attack the caster is unaware of can be blocked by a *dancing shield* if it is the first attack of the round.

The shield has a 50% chance of blocking an attack plus 5% for every level the wizard is higher than the attacker and –5% for each level or Hit Die the attacker is greater than the wizard. A successfully blocked attack is completely neutralized and has no effect on the wizard.

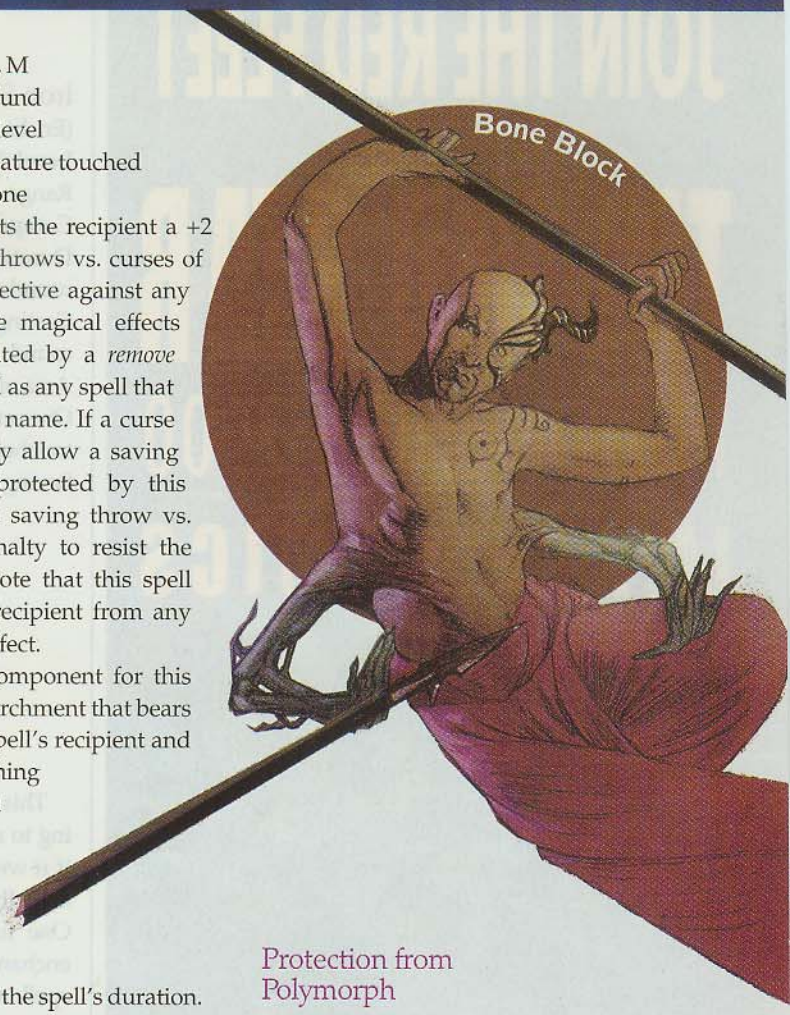
The material component for this spell is a bit of leather from a shield that has been carried in battle by a priest. It is consumed when casting the spell.

Protection from Curse

(Abjuration)
Level: 2
Range: Touch
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 1 round
Duration: 1 turn/level
Area of Effect: Creature touched
Saving Throw: None

This spell grants the recipient a +2 bonus to saving throws vs. curses of all kinds. It is effective against any spell or spell-like magical effects that can be negated by a *remove curse* spell, as well as any spell that has "curse" in its name. If a curse does not normally allow a saving throw, a target protected by this spell can make a saving throw vs. spell at a –4 penalty to resist the curse's effects. Note that this spell doesn't free the recipient from any curse already in effect.

The material component for this spell is a slip of parchment that bears the name of the spell's recipient and a short poem wishing him a long and healthy life. This paper must be kept in the recipient's possession and disintegrates after the spell's duration.



Battle Augury

(Divination)
Level: 3
Range: 0
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 3
Duration: 2 rounds/level
Area of Effect: The caster
Saving Throw: None

A *battle augury* spell gives the caster brief premonitions of the events and attacks that take place during a battle. This information is never specific but takes the form of feelings of danger that make the caster more difficult to surprise and hit. A wizard under the effects of *battle augury* is only surprised on a roll of 1 on 1d12. Additionally, she gains a –2 bonus to her AC and a +2 bonus to saving throws vs. non-area effect spells targeting her.

The material component for this spell is a sliver of parchment from a set of battle plans for a battle that has already occurred. This is not destroyed when the spell is cast.

Protection from Polymorph

(Abjuration)
Level: 3
Range: Touch
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 2 rounds/level
Casting Time: 3
Area of Effect: Creature touched
Saving Throw: Negates

The recipient of this spell receives total immunity to magical spells that induce a shape change. An unwilling target is allowed a saving throw to avoid this spell. Spells such as *polymorph other, polymorph any object,* and *force shapechange* have no effect on the individual. Even beneficial shapechanging spells such as *enlarge* and *polymorph self* don't function on a creature under the effects of this spell. This spell does not, however, prevent creatures such as dopplegangers, lycanthropes, and druids from using their innate shapechanging abilities.

The material component for this spell is a bit of cloth taken from a druid's clothing. It is consumed when casting this spell.

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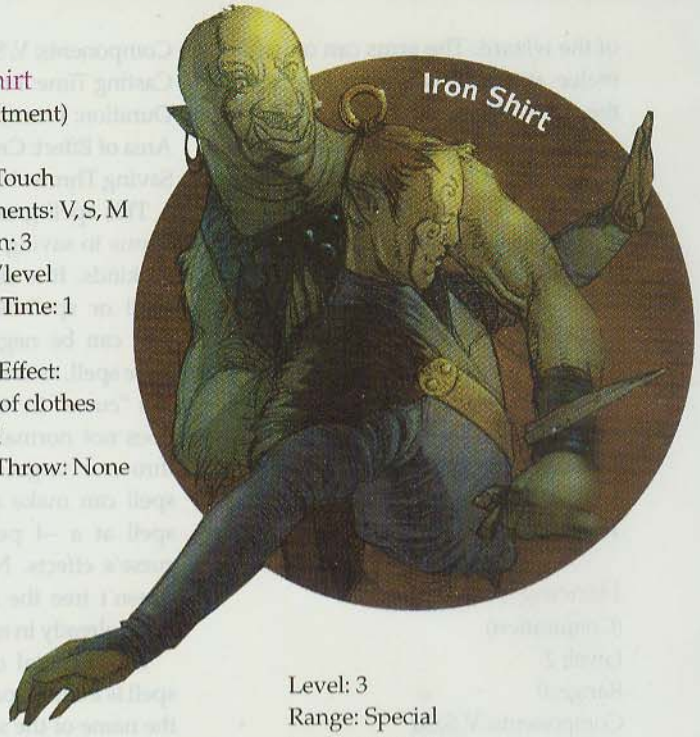

Iron Shirt
(Enchantment)
Level: 3
Range: Touch
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 3 rounds/level
Casting Time: 1 round
Area of Effect: One set of clothes touched
Saving Throw: None

This spell allows normal clothing to resist strikes and blows as if it were made of iron, without actually becoming stiff or heavy. One full set of clothes can be enchanted per casting of the spell, and all those clothes must be worn by the same person. If the clothes are separated or worn by different people, none of them gains the benefit of this spell. Accouterments enhanced by *iron shirt* do not hinder movement or spellcasting in any way.

A full suit of clothing under the effects of *iron shirt* protects the wearer as AC 4. This effect works like normal armor so it cannot be stacked with regular armor, *bracers of defense*, an *armor* spell, or similar magics. It is cumulative with AC bonuses from *blur* spells, Dexterity, *rings of protection*, or similar items.

The material component for this spell is a small iron talisman in the form of a shirt. Such a talisman costs at least 10 gp and is consumed in the spell's casting.

Rary's Defensive Spell Enhancer
(Alteration)
Level: 3
Range: Special
Components: V
Casting Time: Special
Duration: Special
Area of Effect: One spell
Saving Throw: None

This one-word spell focuses and increases the effectiveness of a defensive spell cast by the mage. The *defensive spell enhancer* is cast first, followed immediately by the defensive spell to be enhanced, all during the same round. The enhanced defensive spell protects the wizard with greater power, resulting in a –1 bonus to the recipient's AC, a +1 bonus to the target's saving throw, or a –1 penalty to an attacker's attack roll, depending on the type of spell being enhanced. Thus, an *armor* spell cast with *Rary's defensive spell enhancer* provides AC 5 instead of AC 6, and a *protection from evil* spell causes evil creatures to suffer a –3 penalty to attack rolls and grants a +3 bonus to saving throws made against such attacks.

Despite his extensive research, Owen has yet to find a spell that protects his miniatures from his three-year-old nephew, Stephen.

Continued from page 55

Timed Combination Locks

The next development of the combination lock entails adding in a clockwork mechanism that shuts down all the lock's functions until a set time or times. This means either locking the releasing lever in place or disconnecting the dial (or other device) from the wheels.

The complex nature of timed locks requires a skilled clockmaker to work with the locksmith, and its construction is an expensive endeavor, restricting its use to the extraordinarily wealthy.

When the lock is shut down, a thief's only chance to open the lock is to drill through the lock's faceplate and disengage the clockwork mechanism. The time required depends on the lock's size and armor (1d6 turns is a good range); the DM might even rule some locks out altogether. The thief must make a successful Open Locks roll to disengage the timing system. Once that is complete, the thief can proceed to attempt to pick the lock normally.

Double Buffering

This complication can be applied to any lock and consists of linking two locks so that both must be turned at the same time to open the lock. This situation imposes a critical problem for the thief, for although there is enough leeway to pick one lock at a time, she needs an assistant to hold each picked lock in place. If this job is delegated to another thief, she need only make a Dexterity check to maintain the torque (or tension) wrench in place while the other lock is picked. But, if no other character with the Open Locks skill is available to assist, the nonthief assistant must make a Dexterity check once every 3 rounds that the lock is held.

Triple buffering came into action as a limited form of defense against magic. Three locks are linked as before, except they are also self-sealing: Each lock must be unlocked within a few seconds of the other or else the mechanism springs back into the locked position. This means that, unless the lock is struck with two simultaneous *knock* spells, the locks re-lock themselves. The problem to a thief is that, unlike double buffering, each lock can be individually picked without knowledge of the locks being linked. The DM can make a secret Detect Noise roll to determine whether the thief hears the click within the lock as it re-locks itself. Once this is determined, the thief's only problem lies is finding a competent assistant.

Last Note

Many other methods have evolved to prevent theft: false locks that work exactly like normal locks but have no shear line and so can never be picked; elaborate relief work that conceals the keyhole; hidden buttons that must be depressed for the lock to turn; keys that can be disassembled and reconnected in hundreds of different combinations, with only their owner knowing the correct order; the combination for a pin lock being drilled into the blade of a stiletto dagger ... even pianos can have secret compartments that can be opened only by holding down a certain set of keys. Whatever the case, you should experiment. These are only some of the possible locks you could use. Thieves dedicate themselves to the art of illicit entry and a little work by the DM can mean a lot.

This is Huw Dare-Edwards's first contribution to DRAGON® Magazine. *Currently, between completing an English course and roleplaying, he spends his spare time working on a sequel article about escapology—which he should finish just as soon as he can free himself of that strait-jacket and chains.*

Gamer's Guide

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A Return to Falcon's Bazaar

The Pale Falcon Traders return with gourmet consumables to tempt the discriminating palate.

by Noel Graham

illustrated by Rob Alexander

While unique bits of equipment are certainly of use to travelers everywhere, this visit from the Pale Falcon Traders features important goods of a different sort. Whether it's harvested, hunted, or foraged, food is as important to kings as it is to peasants. Indeed, part of the adventure of travel is experiencing the table fare of exotic lands.

With that in mind, what follows is but a sampling from the more interesting tastes the Pale Falcon Traders have to offer. Also, in some lands certain foods might go under alternate names; celery might be known as "greenstalks," while porcips are merely one variety of mushroom. All the more to add a little flavor to your campaign.

From the Provender

Cheeses are sold in two-pound wheels, handloafs, or "crocks," although larger quantities are available. Other items come measured as listed.

Cockles in Laminari

While these small mussels come to us by way of the Gamboge Forest, their source of origin is the Solnor coast of the former North Province. Cockles are small mussels treasured for their delicate flavor. They are often served steamed with firefinger broth but are just as tasty fresh-plucked from the sand and eaten raw.

The supply arrives packed in barrels of laminari and brine, which serve to protect the cockles for far travel. The laminari is itself a hearty and flavorful purple-brown kelp that takes well to sauces or simply steamed with butter, and it stores well enough once it's dried.

Djekul

A delicious, creamy, powerfully aromatic cheese from the Fruzt settlement of the same name. A growing fancy in the County of Urnst is to spread the fish-scented cheese over crisp-heated bread wedges. Where ovens are not at hand, simply use the cheese as a dipping sauce for raw greenstalks or dried tomatoes.

Goldenseed Nuts

These thin-shelled seeds are harvested from the late-season goldenseed flowers of Furyondy's Gold County. They possess a salty flavor that serves to keep one from excessive thirst during long travels or simply to sate hunger between meals.

Karafruit Sweetchews

If you've ever walked a long trail and grown tired of salted rations, you'll truly appreciate these sweetchews. Seedless cubes of karafruit are cured under the summer sun to produce small, red bites easily retrieved and nibbled. They come wrapped in quaint pouches of folded deklo leaves, enough to fill over a large hand. They're a genuine treat.

Karispa

This peppery cress grows wild in the marshlands of the southwestern Nuther-

wood, where the Artonsamay River shallows and spreads across a wide basin after being joined by the Yol. Chopped or sliced, karispa adds zest to any cold vegetable trencher. When briefly simmered or steeped in red wine vinegar and water, karispa produces a mild but popular pepper sauce.

Molvarti

As Ket produces a number of *premot* or goat cheeses, the Falcons have decided to call this one molvarti. Moderately spiced, it blends particularly well with creme sauces that highlight platters of sliced lamb roast. Molvarti lends its crumbly texture equally well to a bowl of crisp greens basted with goldenseed oil and red wine vinegar.

Pilac

This long, brown grain comes to us on vessels bearing the flag of the Lordship of the Isles. It bears a striking similarity to the uriza "noodle" of the northwestern Flanaess (a fact that has caused something of a stir in those lands).

Like noodles, pilac stores exceedingly well dried and is prepared by boiling or steaming. It adds well to fish stews, as a stuffing for fowl, or broiled in beef rolls. Pilac can also be boiled into a paste or hearty gruel and separated into portions as a trail or "iron" ration. Prices are listed for a 5-pound sack that prepares roughly thrice that amount.

Tusham

A hunting settlement by this name once existed in the Vesve Forest, before Iuz's invading hordes razed it. It was known for exhilarating boar hunts and for the excellent Galdawood-smok meats that came from the results.

During a recent visit to Highfolk, Falcon agents happened upon one of the surviving families that has carried on in defiance of the Old One. Tushams come wrapped in cheesecloth and are the first in a line of seasonal products that will include Tusham-smoked sausages, lard, "hard cure," and even Burneal pronghorn.

Villosa

Villosa is a wild tuber now actively planted in both the Gamboge Forest and the Vesve Forest. The flesh is red and meaty and grows soft when cooked. In these times of scarce crops, these tubers are most valued for their ease of cultivation and resistance to pestilence and spoilage. Even cellar-stored villosa, after proper encouragement, will sprout roots to begin a new crop.

If that weren't enough, extended boiling produces an orange paste suitable for use as a fabric dye. It doesn't require a sage's mind to see that villosa will become an important crop to humans and livestock in the years ahead.

Wickler

Greenish marbling gives this ivory-colored cheese from the Yeomanry its distinguished appearance. Each wheel is aged over twelve months to ensure a smooth, pungent flavor and then sealed within a wax rind.

Freeholders often mix the shredded cheese with mashed, hot-spiced beans and spread over warm flatbread. In Saltmarsh and elsewhere in southern Keoland, it's served as a meal primer along with oil-cured fruit and vinegar-soaked firefingers. Wickler is available with or without nuts.

Wines and More

Sparus Ersitan, Amtither Greyhawk (so named for his faithful peregrine), and other caravan masters hear of favored brews from across the Flanaess, some with such unlikely names as Blastenbeer, Samberra, or Wraithbeer. The variety widens with each trading season to include several new selections featured below. Most are supplied in reinforced barrels warranted to hold 30 gallons.

Ambiere

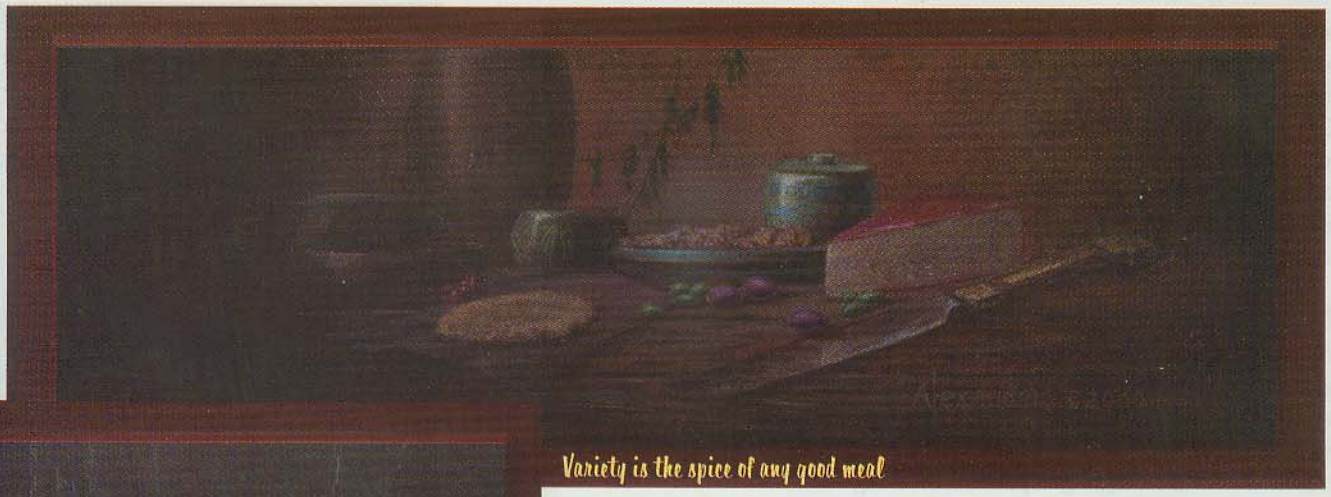
Since the demise of the northern Crystalreach, Ambiere has become Furyondy's premier apple wine. In the goblet, it looks like liquid gold; while on the tongue it's light and crisp. The slightly acidic afterbite and strength of character make it unusually ideal for hearty fare. When warmed it serves to ward off winter

Falcon's Bazaar Price List

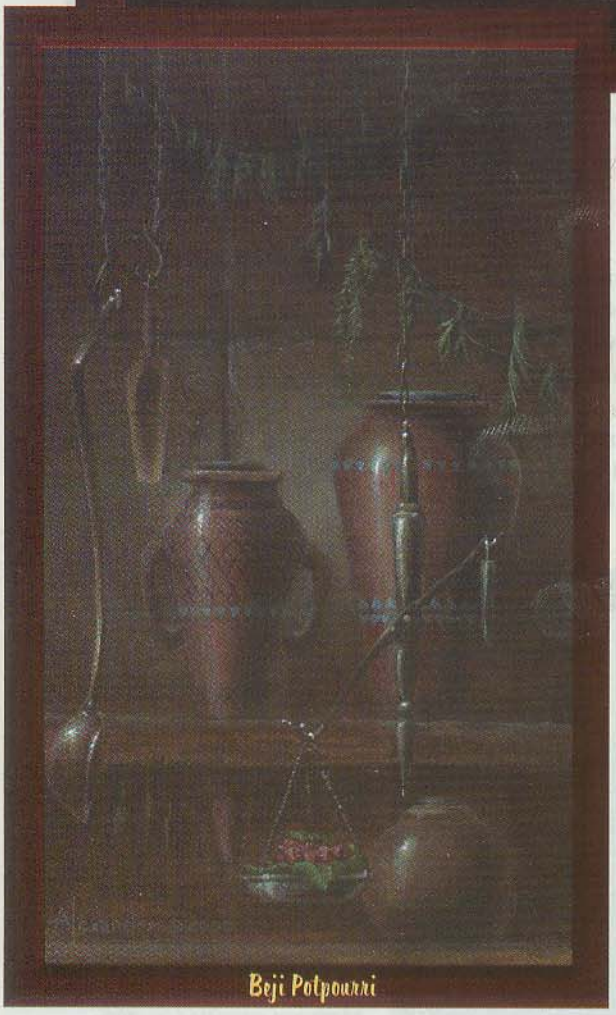
Provisions

Applewine, Furyondian	34 sp
Ambiere	44 sp
Bejl, barrel	67 gp
Cockles in laminari, barrel	100 gp
Djekul	26 sp
Frinnecre, hand keg	1 gp
Galda fruit brandy	
common	10 gp
Tosscor	15 gp
Gauglathiir, bottle	21 gp
Goldenseed nuts	7 sp
Heathen	*
Iriador	12 gp
Kaffet, lb.	24 sp
Karafruit sweetchews	14 cp
Karispa, bushel	55 sp
Mist mash, bottle	21 sp
Molvarti	11 sp
Pilac	15 gp
Shamarit	9 gp
Silaurey	28 sp
Skyrss	3 gp*
Tusham	6 gp
Villosa, bushel	18 gp
Wickler	
with nuts	13 sp
without nuts	12 sp

*** Prices should be set by the DM; see item description.**



Variety is the spice of any good meal



Beji Potpourri

chills, and when brought from the cold cellar, helps refresh and revive.

The secret to this blend of grapes, apples, and spice is held by the House of Throstin alone and has remained unaltered for over a century.

Bejl

Bejl is a blend of wild herbs, leafings, and certain rootstocks created by the naturefolk of the Adri. It's favored as far as the County of Urnst, where it's known by such poetic verse as "Sacred Grove," "Elflord's Delight," and "Citrine Zest."

At once, it appears no more than a lightly-scented potpourri popular near many woodlands. By infusing the blend with steaming water, a hot tonic is prepared that soothes away daily cares. Stock as little or as much as you prefer, from a half-cup dipper to a barrel.

Frinnecre

Celene blends this sweet cyder from fruit juices and extracts taken at the peak of sweetness and preserved without fermentation. Similar cyders are to be had in each of the southern Lortmil lands. Their first offering is a cheery mix of orange, peach, and white grape nectars, light and tasty. The Duchy of Ulek's uskfruit-cherry can be thickly reduced to a wondrous sweet sauce suitable for nut breads or hot kaffet.

Each pottery hand keg is frosted by arcane means, then packed by pairs in barrels of wood shavings to prevent spoilage. Don't miss an opportunity to taste drink from the halls of Arvandor.

Galda Fruit Brandy

Hardly rare, galda fruit brandy is often neglected by the noble classes for no better reason than its common appeal. Through a long-held blending process, the Tosscor family of the so-called "Wild Coast" has managed to excel at the ordinary. Of the barrels we've sampled, each was surprisingly smooth and consistent. So, for a treat beyond its value in coin, just look for the sword and sickle seal.

Gauglathiir

From Celene comes this wintergreen flavored "nectarwine." It has a cast reminiscent of liquid emeralds and possesses a subtle flavor that continues to play across the tongue long after a glass of human wine. Bottles come protected for travel rolled with down and cinched in ribboned satchels of crushed velvet.

Heathen

If reports are to be believed, this thick, sweet berry wine comes from the faraway "marsh dwarves" of Lone Heath. In truth, the wine bears dwarven qualities: It's well fortified and powerful for its size, and it has a taste surely loved once acquired.

Barrels arrive but once per season and are decanted into 2-gallon hand kegs for market; the count is extremely limited! The inquisitive should seek out our agent in the Central Exchange of Greyhawk's Halls of Commerce (the guildhall of the Merchants and Traders Union). Costs for heathen are determined by "negotiation" and average 4 sp (5 gp per barrel).

Iriador

Perhaps the best known wine of all the elven realms is this Celene ruby red. Unlike the typically subtle or delicate

elven vintage, this wine was obviously made to please the human palate. Dark and heavy, its fruity undertones remain stable at room temperature as well as when chilled.

Supply has remained unhindered despite the border closings, but cost is expected to climb in coming seasons. Just to be sure, stock your cellars early.

Kaffet

Kaffet beans are harvested from mountain bushes grown in the Yatils and northern Crystalmists but go unnoticed throughout the Flanaess largely because of social enmities. A bitter tonic brewed from the roasted and ground beans is favored in the reaches of Zeif and now Ket and Bissel for its capacity to stave off weariness from lack of sleep.

Any who have had the opportunity in their long travels to test the reliability of these effects can attest they are as told. Sleep cannot be avoided eternally, of course, and the brew benefits greatly from the addition of honey or, as in the case of a visit to the Duchy of Ulek, elven raspberry sweet sauce.

Mist Mash

Produced in the settlement of Hawkeen (on the Mistmarsh), this beverage is widely becoming known as "spirits" after the process of its making, which is said to capture the very spirit or essence of the ingredients. More potent than brandies or elixirs, its appreciation and acceptance swells with each day. Most recently, it has served to open introductory talks with nearby dwarves who, it's said, are now reconsidering their human neighbors.

Shamarit

Most consider this dry Velunan wine a white but, by careful mixing of dark and light grapes, Shamarit is actually a pale pink. The frost rune on the casks signify these vines were grown in the northernmost vineyards of the Shamarit region and left unpicked until after a good icing. Under normal circumstances this would produce sweetened juice. Instead, somewhere the process has been tinkered with to produce one of the most potent wines we've encountered.

Don't be confused by "true" white Velunan wines from this area that are sometimes sold as shamarit; this one stands above the rest.

Silaurey

Known to most within a star's fall of the Free City as simply "Greyhawk wine," silaurey is popular for its medium body and highly palatable cinnamon flavor. Commonly produced by many Cairn Hills winemakers, those bottles with the vine mark of the Drenn presses are considered superior and have become the standard for comparison.

Skyrss

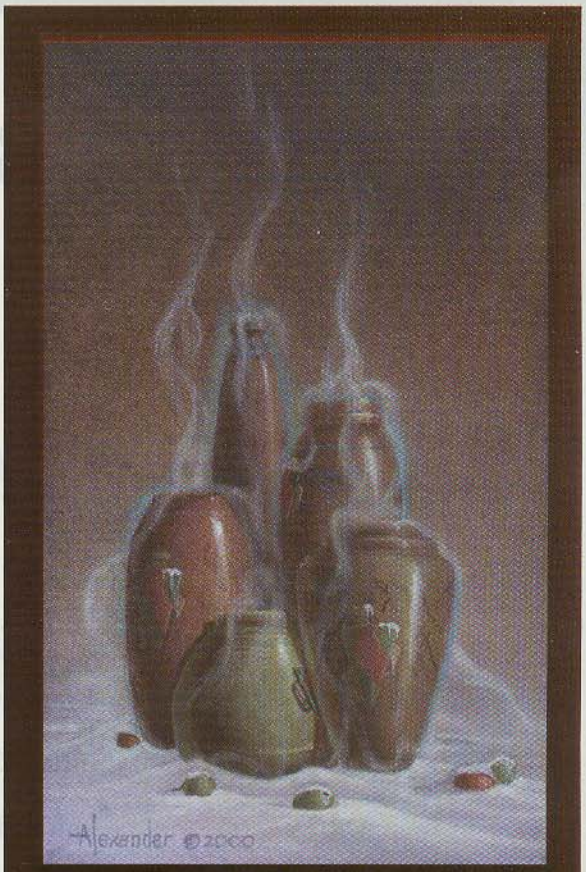
This partially fermented barley and whey drink barely qualifies as a beer, yet its popularity among the powerful northland barbarians and others is on the rise. Skyrss is cloudy and even somewhat sour when a fresh cask is opened.

On the bright side, it's remarkably filling and, for reasons beyond explanation, after consuming large quantities one awakens with a clear head! No doubt this is the source of those wild fireside tales of drunken barbarians who awaken battle-ready to meet invaders foolish enough to attack them at hearth.

Current stocks are being offered at a low price, but sudden change is possible due to unsteady source and demand.

For Your Campaign

As always, these goods needn't enter the campaign from a vacuum. On Oerth, Cariel Mansharn negotiated a contract with (then Crowned Prince) Lynwerd of Nyrond to establish a semi-independent farming estate on abandoned lands north of Midmeadow. The majority of workers and staff are made up of Nyrondese, some of them returning refugees encouraged by Nyrond's slow recovery. The Hepsclen estate also acts as a waystop and storehouse for trade expeditions across the eastern Flanaess.



Vats of Shamarit wine

On the planes, the Indeps have recently forged trading agreements with the agricultural communities of Bytopia (which strongly reminds them of Sigil) and even Arcadia. Some have even discussed the potential for establishing a farming town on the Outlands (a barmy idea if ever there was one).

On Faerûn, the Falcon priakos is currently studying the feasibility of founding an agrarian community similar to Goldenfields, with the possible aid of Harpell "research." (See descriptions of Longsaddle for further information.) In the coming years Luruar will likely grow in unity and population, as wilderness gives way to waymoot settlements and civilization. In the meanwhile, farmers and ranchers are being sought out and catalogued, with negotiations opened for every spare bushel harvested.

Not unlike the Pale Falcons, Noel and the folks of Vision@Work spend a lot of time traversing the Flanaess in search of interesting places and things. Even travelogue writers get hungry. Correspondents can reach Noel at visionatwork@netscape.net.

"Beastly Research" Winners

From the minds of our creative readership come the AD&D® winners for the "Beastly Research" contest.

by Contest Winners

illustrated by Dennis Calero

CREATURE HYBRIDS AND INSECTS FLOODED OUR mailbox after issue #254 hit the shelves. Combinations of elephants, alligators, and giants leapt from their envelopes. Giant beetles, spiders, worms, and other parasites infested our office. Others entries presented hosts of undead, creatures of the Underdark, and even variations on a number of PC races. Different sorts of dragons and drakes also stimulated the creativity of many contestants and proved that these mighty creatures still reign supreme in the imaginations of all fantasy lovers.

However, these are just a few examples of the entries we received. As you'll see in the following pages, several of our readers stretched their imaginations to the limit to come up with nasty new creatures for your AD&D® and SAGA® campaigns.

After receiving over two hundred entries, we finally have our results in for the "Beastly Research" contest. It is still officially our most popular and successful contest to date. Thanks to everyone who sent in an entry; they were all great. Once again, the task of picking a winner was extremely difficult, but after several passes through the huge stack of entries, we had the results. Our AD&D winner was Richard R. Sanders of Hartwell, GA. He sent in a fantastically frightening entry dubbed the visceraith.

Our two AD&D runners-up were Leon Chang of San Diego, CA and Talon Dunning of Atlanta, GA. Leon sent us his deceptively placid soul mask, which could turn even the most unwilling PC into a master thespian. Talon's entry was an entirely new race of creatures known as the dvati, who don't know the meaning of the phrase "sibling rivalry." Leon Chang also scored big with the umbrage, a shadow stealing monster that took first prize in the SAGA category.

Congratulations to the winners and everyone else who sent in an entry. We were very impressed by the imagination and time we know you all spent researching these beasts.

Without further ado, here are the top AD&D entries for your use and enjoyment. Happy hunting!

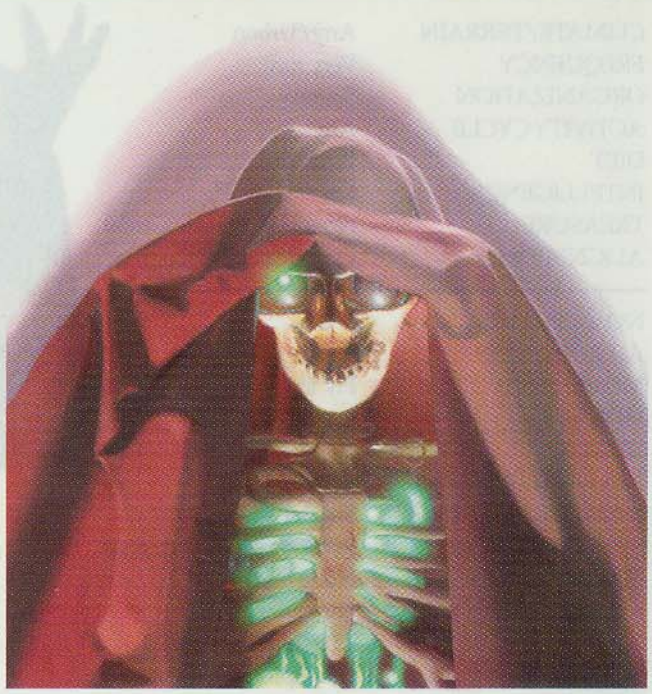
—Chris Thomasson

by Richard Sanders

Visceraith

CLIMATE/TERRAIN	Any
FREQUENCY	Very rare
ORGANIZATION	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE	Any
DIET	Nil
INTELLIGENCE	Exceptional (15–16)
TREASURE	W (×2)
ALIGNMENT	Neutral (evil)

NO. APPEARING	1
ARMOR CLASS	2 or 7
MOVEMENT	12 or Fly 9 (D)
HIT DICE	7+3
THAC0	13
NO. OF ATTACKS	2
DAMAGE/ATTACK	1–6/1–6 or by weapon type (×2)
SPECIAL ATTACKS	Bone control
SPECIAL DEFENSES	+1 or better weapon to hit
MAGIC RESISTANCE	See below
SIZE	M (4½'–6½')
MORALE	Champion (15–16)
XP VALUE	3,000



The visceraith, or bone spirit, exists in a twilight of shadows and whispers. The entity appears as a brain with eyes and a tongue. Nerves and tissue connect the brain to a dangling set of organs—heart, lungs, stomach, and so on—all glowing green. Visceraiths are formed only when the powerful yearning for life is combined with a wizard's use of magic. As a result, visceraiths are impossible to summon or create.

As hermit crabs use discarded shells for protection, visceraiths are usually found within humanoid skeletons they have assembled with their *bone control* ability. As with "normal" undead skeletons, the bones are contiguous without connective tissue. The brain and glowing eyes inhabit the skull, and a whispering tongue finds residence in the jaw. The other organs arrange themselves within the torso. The visceraith can use any unbroken bone to augment itself as long as the framework can contain the creature. Insinuating itself into a skeleton requires 1 turn, but exiting takes only 1 round. Some bone spirits assemble specialized skeletons (with an animal skull that permits a bite attack, for example).

Supported in this fashion, the visceraith moves among the living, concealing its nature under robes. The bone spirit resides where it can lead a secluded existence, though it might hire servants or find companions. Living residents in the home of a visceraith are usually treated well, but the bone spirit is not above murder to protect its identity.

Combat: A visceraith is usually (95% chance) found "wearing" a skeleton (AC 2); otherwise it has an AC of 7. Any intelligent being seeing a visceraith free of its skeleton must make a successful saving throw vs. paralyzation or be stricken with fear for 1d4 rounds, suffering a –2 penalty on attack rolls and a +2 penalty to AC.

If the creature has claws, it inflicts 1d6 points of damage per hit. If it has "normal" hands, it employs weapons usable by mages, can attack with a weapon in each hand without penalty, but doesn't use armor or shields.

The visceraith's deadliest attack is its *bone control* ability, which has a range of 60 feet. The target must make a saving throw vs. death magic. If successful, there is no effect, but if the saving throw fails, the chosen bone snaps, resulting in a compound fracture and 1d6+4 points of damage. The victim is immobilized due to shock, loses 2 hit points per round until bleeding is stopped, and must make a Constitution check to avoid fainting for 1d12 rounds from the pain. The visceraith can use this attack form four times per day.

Visceraiths retain whatever spellcasting ability they had in life. They can learn the maximum number of spells allowable but cannot advance in level.

Like most undead, visceraiths are immune to *sleep*, *charm*, and *hold* spells, as well as to cold-based attacks. Fire-based attacks cause normal damage, nonmagical weapons are ineffective, and blunt weapons of +1 or greater enchantment cause normal damage. Slashing or piercing weapons of +1 or greater enchantment inflict half damage.

Visceraiths are unharmed by holy water and can't be turned.

Habitat/Society: Visceraiths seek out the company of living beings when possible and shun other undead. They do not despise the living, instead hoping to continue the life they left behind. These creatures are not always evil but will go to great lengths to avoid exposure or destruction.

Ecology: An undead being, the visceraith has no physiological functions, so it doesn't occupy a proper slot in any world's biosphere.

Soul Mask

by Leon Chang

CLIMATE/TERRAIN	Any/Urban
FREQUENCY	Very rare
ORGANIZATION	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE	Any
DIET	Emotions
INTELLIGENCE	Low (5–7)
TREASURE	None
ALIGNMENT	Chaotic neutral
NO. APPEARING	1–2
ARMOR CLASS	0
MOVEMENT	Fly 15 (A)
HIT DICE	2
THAC0	19
NO. OF ATTACKS	1
DAMAGE/ATTACK	Special
SPECIAL ATTACKS	Emotion projection, graft
SPECIAL DEFENSES	None
MAGIC RESISTANCE	Nil
SIZE	T (1–2 square feet)
MORALE	Champion (15–16)
XP VALUE	175

Soul masks were once used in plays and operas to communicate to the audience a state of mind or emotion: happiness, fear, hate, or sadness. However, unlike their mundane counterparts, they have been given life by the enormous output of emotion to which they have been subjugated; the spirit of the actors and the audience animates the soul mask and nourishes it. Without further emotional input, the soul mask would perish, thus it seeks to find a place where such emotion is plentiful, or else find a host upon whose emotional energy it can feed.

Combat: A soul mask has two abilities that it can use to derive its necessary sustenance. The first is its innate ability to project *emotion* (as the 4th-level wizard spell) at will to all who can see it. The emotion projected varies depending on the type of soul mask; any of the eight emotions detailed by the spell are possible soul masks, but soul masks projecting happiness, fear, hate, and sadness are the most common. Those who save against its effect are thereafter immune to this particular soul mask's *emotion* projection.

The second ability requires a successful attack by the soul mask on a humanoid (or any other target to which the mask can graft itself). Armor provides no protection against this attack unless it is a helmet, which, if it fully covers the face, renders the target immune. If the soul mask's attack is successful, it has grafted itself to the target's face. At that time, the victim must make a saving throw vs. paralyzation; if the target fails, she suddenly begins to act out a scene from a play or opera, playing to the hilt the part the of the protagonist but representing the soul mask's particular emotion. The scene takes 2d6 rounds to complete, at the end of which the victim can make another saving throw vs. paralyzation, with the same attendant consequences for failure.

Once the victim has made a successful saving throw, she resists the urge to act for 1d6 turns but is under the effect of the *emotion* spell. At the end of this respite, she must make another saving throw or continue to act out scenes. A *remove curse* cast by a wizard or priest allows the subject to resist the mask's effects for one day in combination with a successful saving throw. Spells designed to counter the emotion projected by the mask are ineffective. (The mask also provides the wearer immunity to such spells as *fear* and *emotion*.) A *dispel magic* removes the mask and renders it inert for 1 round, after which time it begins projecting *emotion* and attacking again. Any physical attack on the soul mask while it is grafted to its host also affects the host.

A somewhat two-edged benefit of the mask is that anyone wearing it gains the Acting proficiency and can play the part of any character in the mask's repertoire to perfection. Of course, this is because the victim is not truly acting—she feels only the emotion the soul mask projects.

Habitat/Society: Soul masks rarely congregate unless they were awakened together. Sometimes, two masks of opposite emotions are encountered together. The victims of such a pair of masks often become engrossed in a beautiful bit of contrapuntal dialogue.

Ecology: Soul masks are parasites that need emotional energy to survive. Each day a soul mask is deprived of emotional input, it loses 1 hit point. The materials used to construct soul masks are often quite mundane, usually wood or clay. Dead soul masks fetch market value for an ordinary mask (no more than a few silver pieces). Soul masks are not known to hoard treasure of any material value, but the repertoires of soul masks can be quite extensive, and they might be of interest to bards and actors for this reason.

by Talon Dunning

Dvati

CLIMATE/TERRAIN	Outlands
FREQUENCY	Rare
ORGANIZATION	Clan
ACTIVITY CYCLE	Any
DIET	Omnivore
INTELLIGENCE	High (13–14)
TREASURE	C, Q, R
ALIGNMENT	Any good or neutral

NO. APPEARING	2–12 (always in groups of two)
ARMOR CLASS	10 (unarmored)
MOVEMENT	12
HIT DICE	2+2 (or by class)
THAC0	19 (or by class)
NO. OF ATTACKS	2
DAMAGE/ATTACK	1–4 or by weapon type
SPECIAL ATTACKS	Ambidexterity
SPECIAL DEFENSES	Confusion
MAGIC RESISTANCE	Nil
SIZE	M (5'–6')
MORALE	Champion (15–16)
XP VALUE	175 (each)

The dvati are a race of humanoids that dwell throughout the Outlands. All dvati are born identical twins; their priests explain that the dvati soul is so powerful a force that it takes two bodies to house it.

Dvati appear elven due to their slight build, but the resemblance ends there. They have snow-white skin; thick, black hair (that is rather difficult to cut); and solid blue eyes that seem to lack irises or pupils. Their noses are almost nonexistent, having only a pair of small, slitted nostrils that protrude slightly from the face. Their shapely and graceful hands have but three fingers and a thumb.

Combat: The dvati are typically nonviolent, considering themselves artists and philosophers. However, they are well versed in the arts of combat and defend themselves with deadly cunning. They commonly employ small, hand-held throwing blades and throwing stars. They are particularly fond of the *tvan'th*, an S-shaped throwing blade that returns when thrown properly.

Player character dvati can be fighters (up to level 16), priests (13), wizards (16), thieves (12), or bards (15). They enjoy the following multiclass options: fighter/wizard, fighter/priest, fighter/thief, wizard/thief, or fighter/wizard/thief. Additionally, all dvati are paired twins, meaning players who choose to create dvati characters must create two characters.

In combat, dvati work together to defeat enemies. A favorite tactic is circling a foe, using their echo-voice ability to confuse the target. This power involves speaking aloud in unison in such a way that the voices seem as if they come from everywhere at once. This results in a great deal of confusion, and those who fail a saving throw vs. spell suffer a –4 penalty to hit while the power is in effect. The ability takes 1 round to activate, and both dvati must be able to circle the target and speak. As long as they keep the echo-voice going, the attack penalty remains.

Dvati are inherently ambidextrous and possess the Two-weapon Fighting Style proficiency. In melee combat, they prefer paired weapons and gain an additional attack per round when using them.

A dvati cannot survive without its counterpart; if one is killed, the other loses 1d6 hit points per day until it dies. This loss cannot be restored by anything short of a *wish*.

Habitat/Society: Dvati society is based entirely around the number two. This does not mean they are obsessively orderly or lawful, but simply that their art, architecture, language, and philosophies are all based around the idea of duality. Dvati children are always raised together, and they stay together after they reach adulthood.

Dvati twins can communicate with each other telepathically. This closeness doesn't bother them as it might members of other races. Indeed, the dvati relish their closeness.

Dvati gather in large communities, often building towns or cities in the Outlands. Each community is broken into four ruling houses, each governed by four subgroups called "rings."

Socially, dvati are a friendly and outgoing. They actively trade with other races and encourage contact with strangers. They are honest and slow to recognize dishonesty in others, though one act of dishonesty brands a person as a liar for life.

Ecology: The term "dvati" applies not only to the race but also to a set of twins. Indeed, due to their belief that a twin set share a soul, there is no singular pronoun in their language. The dvati farm and hunt, eating a stable diet of meats and vegetables. They have no special affinity for treasure but are fond of gems, working them into the items they craft.

The Ecology of the Bag of Devouring

Hiders Keepers

With an appetite unmatched by any other creature, these tricky beasts can decimate your treasure hoard.

by Kevin N. Haw

illustrated by Corey Macourek

How did I become the Keeper? It wasn't my idea at all.

A ghost suggested it.

My story began forty years ago in Colthar, a large port on the Regal Sea. Like any wealthy city, Colthar was infested with thieves. So many that some were forced to specialize to survive. I was one of those specialists.

I stole from wizards.

It was dangerous, but work was plentiful and paid well—retrieving knick-knacks from one sorcerer on behalf of another. It was during one such mission that my old career came to an end.

A moonless night found me deep within a certain baron's castle, rummaging through the magician's workshop. Although my pockets were heavy with small items for myself, I hadn't found the scroll I'd been hired to retrieve. I was just about to give up when I discovered something interesting at the bottom of an old battered chest.

It was a threadbare bundle of fabric, smelling of cedar. I opened it and saw it was a bag, one with more room inside than outside. A bag of holding! It was empty, which seemed odd for something so useful, but I didn't quibble. I knew a fence who would pay well for it.

The sound of a key in the door interrupted my thoughts. Unless I acted swiftly, I was caught! There were no windows and only the one door, so running was out of the question. Worse, the room was tiny, without even a closet to conceal me. There was only one place to hide.

I opened the bag and leaped in until just my head and arms were sticking out. It's weird, I tell you, to reach down to where your legs should be but find nothing! Shutting the chest from the inside, I heard the door creak open and a man shriek for the guards. I sealed the bag's opening, disappearing from view.

As long as no one opened the chest and looked inside the bag, I was safe. When a search of the keep found nothing, the guards would assume their burglar had escaped. They'd drop their guard, and I could sneak out the next morning disguised as a workman.

I simply had to wait.

It was a tight squeeze, so I had to crouch to fit.[1] It was pitch black, but the walls felt like leather and gave slightly when I poked with my finger. The air smelled old and dusty, like an abandoned attic. After a while I began counting my breaths.

At a thousand no one had come after me. The air was stuffy, and I wanted some ventilation. I reached up and couldn't find the opening! I searched everywhere, running my hands over every bit of the interior, trying not to

1. Per the *Dungeon Master® Guide*, a *bag of devouring* can hold 30 cubic feet. This capacity requires a cylindrical area 32 inches in diameter and 5 feet deep.

panic. Perhaps the guards knew where I was hiding and had tied the bag shut to suffocate me!

I was desperate, not thinking straight, when I decided to cut myself out. Stupidest thing you can do of course, cutting into something "extradimensional," as the wizards say. No room for my short sword, so I drew my dagger and began to slice into the roof of my little prison.[2] I figured things couldn't get any worse.

Of course, I was wrong. The walls started to ... well, ripple, for want of a better word. I pulled back to stab harder when a hole opened up beneath my feet and the stench hit.

It reeked of rotting garbage and mildew, but over everything was a burning, metallic tang as though someone had tossed all the chemicals in an alchemist's shop onto a carrion heap! It was awful, but it was nothing compared to the agony when the chamber began flooding with acid.[3]

I dropped my dagger and scrambled upward, clawing my way clear. My burned feet were safe for a moment, but the acid was rising.

How I remembered it is a mystery, but one of the items in my pocket from the wizard's den was a ring of acid resistance.[4] I slipped it on, and it grew warm and hummed faintly. My feet were in agony, and my boots burned to tatters, but when the acid finally engulfed me I felt only a tingling sensation, not the hideous pain I had expected.

Even if the stuff didn't burn, it could drown me. I probed with my foot and found that the drainhole had opened into a tunnel, and it was wide enough for me to slip through. My only option was pretty obvious.

Filling my lungs with all the stale air they could hold, I dove down the tunnel feet first. The going wasn't easy, though! The fluid was thick, closer to stew than water. Lots of spongy, half-rotten pieces of ... things I'd rather not talk about.

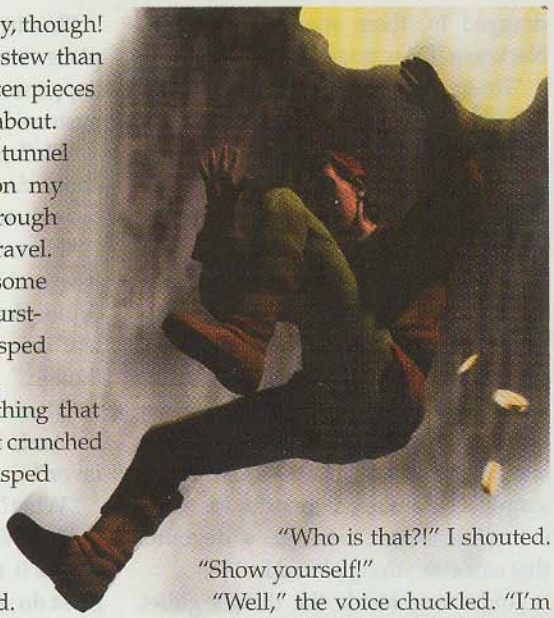
After maybe five yards, the tunnel curved sideways.[5] I swam on my back, my spine scrapping through something that felt like gravel. When the tunnel opened into some kind of pool, my lungs were bursting. I broke the surface and gasped some putrid but breathable air.

I swam blindly into something that felt like an island of garbage. It crunched as I crawled out of the acid, gasped for breath, and flopped onto my back. I stared into the darkness overhead, stunned by how fast it had all happened. The whole thing, from the first whiff of acid to my lying on that island, had taken maybe twenty heartbeats.[6]

Inside my pouch was a tinderbox and small candle, which yielded a dim flame when lit. I peered into the shadows and found myself in a round cavern, maybe thirty paces wide. My little island was indeed a mound of rotting garbage, shattered bones, and pieces of driftwood. It was five paces wide and in the center of the acid pool. The ceiling was maybe three times my height, so I could stand up if I didn't mind sinking shin deep into the filth.

There were no other entries or exits, no marks on the strangely ridged walls and ceiling, no sign that any living being had ever been there. The cavern was desolate and empty except for the acid pool and the little island. It was absolutely the last place you'd expect to be greeted by a cheerful, grandfatherly voice.

"Why, hullo there!" called the voice from behind. I whirled, sword drawn for whatever I faced. No one was in sight.



"Who is that?!" I shouted. "Show yourself!"

"Well," the voice chuckled. "I'm afraid that's not possible, old boy."

By this time I was spinning like mad, desperately seeking the voice's source. After a moment, I realized that it came from everywhere at once and also from nowhere in particular. I'd seen enough strangeness while thieving from mages to know what that meant.

"Ah," I asked, weapon still drawn. "You are a ghost, right?"

"Well, I believe so," answered the voice. Then, in a musing tone, "Technically, I might be an apparition or a spectre. Never could keep them straight. What do they call the harmless ones?"

"Er, a poltergeist?"

"Don't think so. They can't talk. Probably can't think, either. Just bang on windowsills and knock over bottles."

"You've got a point there."

A long, almost embarrassing silence followed.

I finally said, "You don't act like a ghost."

"I suppose not. But, it's not like I received any instruction. After I was

2. The interior of a *bag of devouring* is AC 7 and can withstand 15+1d6 points of damage before ripping. If ripped, the *bag* is destroyed, forming a 10-foot-wide vortex to the Astral plane, just as if a *portable hole* were placed within a *bag of holding*. Anyone inside the *bag of devouring* receives no saving throw against the vortex, while those outside can make a Dexterity check to jump clear. Except for destroying the *bag* and sealing one of its "mouths," the devourer is unharmed.

If the damage inflicted does not rip the *bag*, then the character trapped within is subject to immediate acid attack (below).

3. A devourer launches an acid attack if any damage is inflicted from inside the *bag*. Every round, the acid causes 1 point of damage for every Hit Die of the devourer, although a successful saving throw vs. poison reduces the damage by half. See below for determining a devourer's Hit Dice.

4. A *ring of acid resistance* protects from all forms of normal acid, up to 30 points of damage per round. The wearer gains a +2 bonus to saving throws vs. additional damage. The *ring* works continuously when worn and radiates faint magic. The *ring* has a resale value of 5,000 gp and is worth 2,500 XP.

5. This is the "throat" of the creature, linking mouth and stomach. It is AC 7 and withstands 15+2d6 hit points before ripping. Anyone being swallowed attacks at a –5 penalty and cannot resist being pulled further into the beast. (See below.) If ripped, a vortex forms just as with a ripped *bag* and no one in the throat or *bag* receives a saving throw. The devourer suffers no ill effects except the loss of the *bag*.

6. A trip from a *bag of devouring* to a devourer's stomach takes 4 rounds if the object (or victim) isn't resisting. Characters actively making their way to the stomach ("going with the flow") take 3 rounds if their movement is below 6 and 2 rounds if it's 6 or more. A character can resist being pulled closer to the stomach every round as they would resist being swallowed in the first place (75% base chance of failure minus 5% per Strength bonus). Resistance isn't recommended because every round spent reaching the stomach subjects the victim to an acid attack.

dragged in, there was just pain and blackness. Then, poof, I'm a ghost."

"Dragged in? Into what?"

"Why, into the beast, of course. Through a bag of devouring."

When he said that, my heart went cold. I felt my limbs weaken, and the sword slipped from my hands.

It all made sense, then. Why something as useful as a bag of holding would be left in the wizard's chest, empty and neglected. Why it had closed up, sealing me in. The terrifying, bizarre journey through the acid. It all fit with the stories about bags of devouring—that they are simply camouflaged mouths for some extradimensional monster, a devourer that eats everything placed inside.

And I was inside the thing's gullet, waiting to be digested.

"Are you all right?" the ghost asked, concern in its voice. "Surely, this isn't a surprise to you."

"You have no idea how surprised," I laughed, trying to keep my rising hysteria out of my voice. "I thought it was a bag of holding."

"Oh, my! Since you were protected from the acid, I thought you were an explorer. A scholar or biologist like myself, perhaps. I'd hoped that you had come here to complete my work."

"Huh?"

"My name is Philby, Josiah Rufus Philby of the Naturalist Guild of Elfmist City. I am, or rather was, the foremost expert on the bag of devouring."

"If you were such an expert, how did you ... well..."

"Get eaten? A laboratory accident. My own fault, really. I'd just had a horrible argument with my guildmaster, you see. He had the nerve to call my research worthless, said there was no practical application for it! I was upset and distracted, and I forgot to take the proper safety precautions before resuming work with one of my bags of devouring."

"And it pulled you in?"

"In a heartbeat. I've been haunting this place ever since then. I hear that's what happens when you die with unfinished business left."

"Philby, since you know so much about devourers, can you help me get out of here?"

"Hmmm ... an interesting challenge. It would be difficult..." he faded off. I could picture him rubbing his nonexistent chin in thought. "I'll give it a try, though."

"That's great! Let's get—"

"And, in return, you must do me a favor."

"What?" I sputtered. "You're a ghost, Philby! What can I possibly do for you?"

"We'll settle that later. For now, you must do some exploring."

I paused to put some herbal salve from my kit on my feet, then shredded my cloak to make wrappings to replace my boots. I checked to see the ring was still working and waded into the muck, my pitiful candle held high.[7]

Philby directed me toward the walls, and I discovered that they were indeed living flesh. The color varied from a dull pink to a light gray. There were twenty little alcoves in the wall, scattered around the chamber's perimeter. Philby informed me that each alcove had a flap beneath the acid to control access to the stomach. Each of those in turn led to a tunnel and thence to another bag of devouring. No wonder the stomach was so big—the creature had twenty mouths![8]

"Philby, do you think I can cut through a flap?"

"Not likely. There's three feet of muscle protecting that exit.[9] Unless you have a blade more impressive than that little pig sticker, it'd take days. Try to find another flap weakened by disease or birth defect."

I checked every alcove, but none proved any weaker than the first. Philby decided we needed another approach.

"You said you were, how shall I put it, 'involved with the underworld' back home?"

"Yes, I'm a burglar," I replied, defensively. "In Colthar, it's considered an honorable trade—"

"I'm sure it is," Philby interrupted. "Can you climb that wall?"

"Why?"

"Well, you see, devourers start out as an embryo with a single, nonmagical mouth. Only later do they grow bags of devouring on other planes."

"And how will that get me home?"

"The nonmagical mouth grows shut, but it forms a weak spot. I've examined it on this specimen, and it's thinner than the mouth flaps, but it's in a very precarious place."[10]

"Where?"

"In the ceiling, directly above you."

So, it was back into that muck to study the walls. They were covered with a thick, clear film,[11] so at first I thought they were unclimbable. But when I looked closely I saw the wall's texture was similar to the ridges on the roof of my mouth, but much bigger. The entire surface was a network of handholds.

Even with that, it was a hard climb.[12] It would have been easier with climbing spikes, but I had none. I was halfway up the wall panting for breath when I reached for a long horizontal wrinkle to use as a handhold. Suddenly, it opened to reveal an eight inch wide eye staring right at me! The pupil was slitted like a cat's, but the whole surface was milky, like an animal with horrible cataracts. It scared me down to my toenails! I lost my grip and fell backward into the pool.

I came to the surface sputtering. In the candlelight from the island, I saw the eyelid close, apparently content that I was causing no more trouble.

"Philby! What was that!"

"Just an eye, nothing to worry about. There's one above each alcove."

"You mean it's watching me?!"

7. A devourer's stomach acid is approximately 5 feet deep. A character can wade or swim through this fluid at 50% normal movement rate.

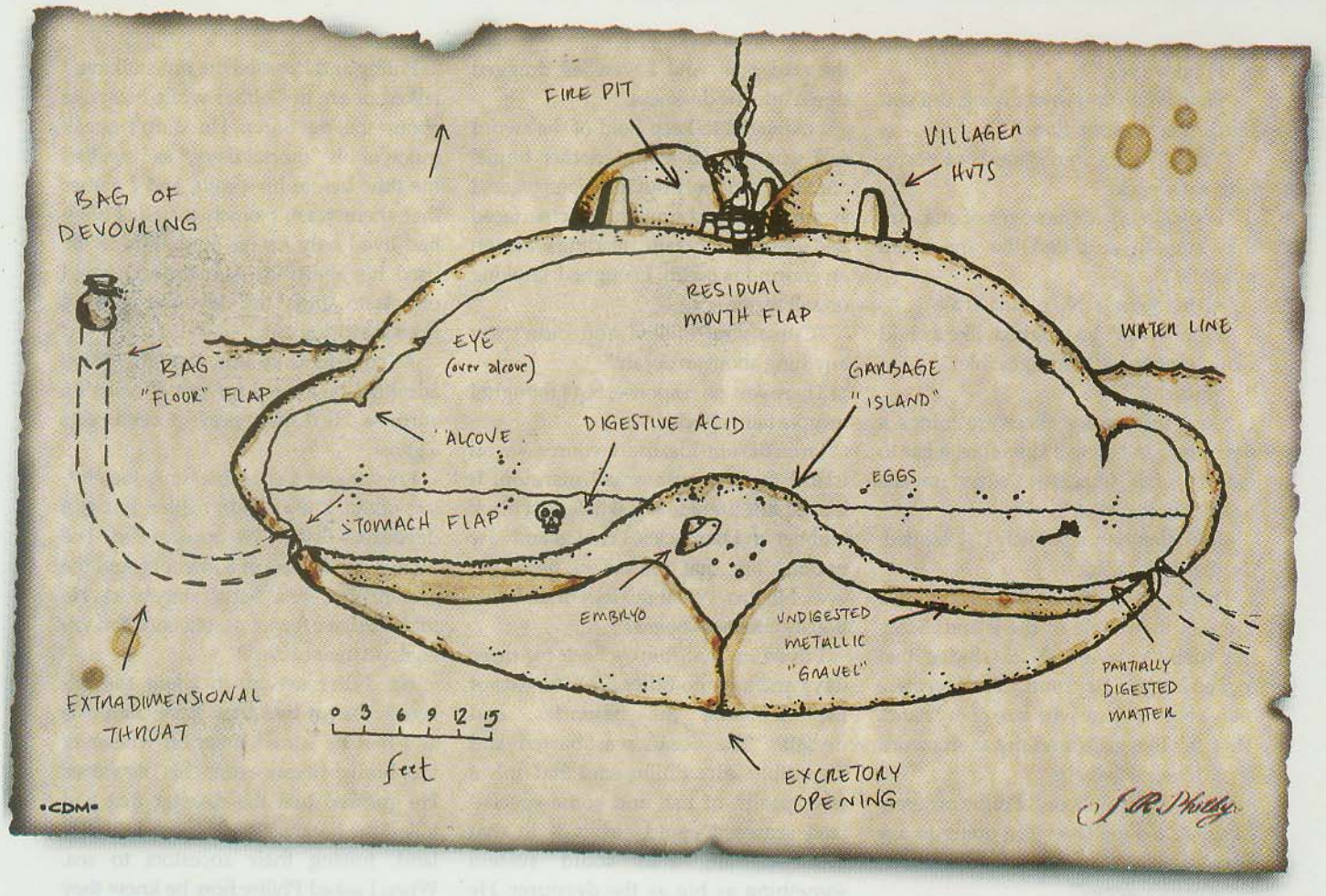
8. A devourer has 3d20 bags of devouring serving as mouths. Each mouth corresponds to five years of age and 1 Hit Die.

9. A character attacking one of these flaps must inflict one-third the creature's total hit points to get through. (Note that devourers are immune to all poisons and acids.) Like the inside of a *bag of devouring*, a devourer's stomach is AC 7. Upon causing more than 10 points of damage, however, the attacker and anyone else in the stomach are subject to expulsion from the stomach. (See below.)

10. This residual mouth flap is treated as any mouth flap, except that it takes only one-quarter of the creature's hit points to penetrate. If a melee weapon is used, the DM might require extra Climbing proficiency checks to reach it.

11. This film is similar to the lining of an animal's stomach, protecting flesh from digestive acid. It has strong acid resistant properties and can be used as an ingredient in acid resistant magical items.

12. Such a climb imposes a –30% penalty on a Climbing check. Driving spikes into the wall or using other climbing equipment has a 50% chance of causing expulsion from the stomach. (See below.)



"Well, yes. All its senses face inward, toward its next meal. Hardly smarter than a dog, in fact. This one isn't sentient, you see."[13]

"*This* one?"

"Of course. Some devourers react oddly to strong, continued doses of magical energy. They begin—"

"Forget it," I interrupted. "I don't want to know."

"You probably don't. Why don't you rest, and I'll try to think of another way out."

I sighed heavily, shaking my head.

When I'd fallen, I'd scraped my elbow on the bottom of the pool. I cleaned the wound and noticed something glinting. Pulling it out, I found a tiny nugget of copper, heavily pitted but very shiny.

I felt something stirring deep inside my heart, a basic element of my nature that had been sorely neglected for hours: my greed.

"Philby," I asked, my mouth going dry in anticipation. "What's at the bottom of the acid pool?"

"Oh, that stuff. Bits of slowly digested material. You see, when people lose something in a bag of devouring, some substances take longer than others to digest. Flesh, leather, and parchment dissolve almost immediately. Wood and bone last a little longer. Metals and gems take months to break down.[14] Even magical items eventually succumb. And since people often mistake bags of devouring for bags of holding—"

"Any treasure they toss in winds up at the bottom of the pool," I completed. "And there would always be a steady supply, too! I mean, nobody keeps a bag of devouring once they know what it is. They either trick an enemy into taking it or throw it away for someone else to find. There'd never be a shortage of fools tossing stuff into a devourer's gullet!"

"Well, yes. That's part of its survival strategy," Philby replied. "And just why are you so excited?"

I ignored him and instead dove under the surface. I surfaced with a handful of gold nuggets! Some time later five pounds of gold and silver flakes rested in my knapsack. My pouch held a handful of diamonds and rubies the size of rice grains.[15] My candle was sputtering, though, so I decided to continue looking for an escape.

"Are you finished?" asked the ghost, his voice dripping sarcasm.

13. At the DM's discretion, any devourer with ten or more mouths might have mutated by magical energy to have an Intelligence score of 4. Such a devourer watches characters through its eyes and communicates via telepathy. Because the devourer rarely interacts with other creatures (except to eat them) and knows nothing of the world outside, its personality resembles that of a petulant child ("You not screaming in pain like other food. I make you scream now."). While one might be convinced via mind control magic or trickery to help, the end result will more likely be acid attacks or expulsion from the stomach.

14. Obviously, goods swallowed by a *bag of devouring* are not spit out into extradimensional space. Instead, they must make saving throws against acid upon initial contact and once per day thereafter until they dissolve. Ceramics and glass, however, automatically make their saving throws.

15. The stomach of a devourer with ten or more mouths holds treasure equivalent to treasure type A except that no platinum or art objects are found intact, and gems are never more valuable than 50 gp. For every extra fifteen mouths, roll again for treasure. (So a DM would roll twice for a twenty-five mouth devourer and three times for a forty mouth monster).

"For now, yes."

"Fine. When you were diving, did you find any ceramic or glass?"

"Yeah. There's some shards of porcelain in my pack."

"Look closely at the edges of one. Are they smooth or pitted like the metal nuggets?"

"That's strange. No pitting at all."

"Wonderful!" he laughed, like a child with a new toy. "It's indigestible!"

"And...?"

"And that means there are things a devourer can't digest. Therefore, it has to get rid of it somehow, which means there's another exit!"

"Isn't there another way?" I replied, disgust in my voice.

There wasn't. Philby told me to dig through the rubble in the island. Soon, the rubbish gave way to sludge that looked like red clay mud.[16] Further, there were ebony spheres the size of my hand. They felt like glass, and my short sword couldn't scratch them.[17]

"Take some of those," Philby ordered. "They're for the favor I'm going to ask later."

"Are they gems?"

"No. Much more valuable."

He didn't have to tell me twice. I shoved several in my knapsack and kept digging. Finally, I reached some of the creature's flesh.

"Philby, you're sure about this?"

"Yes. Go ahead."

Following Philby's directions, I took a deep breath and slammed my short sword into the devourer with both hands! The reaction was as he'd expected, and the beast rippled in pain.[18] If my earlier cut had caused a tremor, this was the grandfather of all earthquakes! A hole opened, and the island, the acid pool, and I were all dragged down into the darkness.

I managed to keep hold of the sword as I was pushed along another tunnel and then suddenly out into open water. I swam up toward sunlight, then surfaced and gasped for breath, treading water on an enormous ocean. I coughed, choking on salt water.

"Curse you, Philby! You didn't say anything about an ocean!"

There was no response, but I thought I heard a faint chuckle.

From the outside, the devourer was an island the size of a small mansion. It looked like the side of a whale, just black blubber and barnacles. I circled and saw nothing but that mound of flesh. No eyes. No fins. When my legs tired, I cautiously climbed aboard.

I lived on that thing's back for three days and saw no other creature except the devourer, the barnacles, and myself.[19] The ocean was barren and incredibly salty. Philby said that only a few species of fish and some specialized seaweed could survive in that brine—nothing that could sustain something as big as the devourer. He felt that was why the beasts originally began getting food from other dimensions. Somehow, the sea had died, and the devourers were forced to look elsewhere for nourishment. They're like sea anemones, casting their tentacles as wide as possible for food. Instead of tentacles, though, their bags of devouring capture prey on dozens of other planes.

I, however, was not that fortunate. I tried fishing but never got a bite. Instead, I survived on blubber sliced from the beast's back. The stuff tasted horrible, but I appreciated the irony of my diet.

Philby and I passed the time talking. I talked of life in Colthar while he spoke about the devourer. He didn't speak much of his "mortal days," as he called the time before his death, and I gather that there wasn't much to tell. Philby had lived only for his studies. Now he used his ability to pass through solid objects to study the devourer literally from the inside out.

As content as he was, though, Philby admitted he longed for rest. It wasn't a surprise. He'd spent nearly a century as a ghost.

I never saw a coastline, only the endless ocean. Philby hadn't either but said devourers drifted by on occasion. The infants are the size of a rowboat, and the ancient ones are as big as a city block. He told me that a few of the big ones had villages on their backs.[20]

He didn't say much about the villagers, except that they were cannibals and that he scared them off whenever they brought a canoe near "his" devourer. He guessed that the disaster that had killed the oceans also destroyed the dry land, forcing their ancestors to sea. When I asked Philby how he knew they were cannibals, he refused to answer. I didn't press the issue but decided that anyone who could scare a ghost was best avoided.[21]

On the fourth morning, in the distance, Philby spotted my way home.

"Where is it?" I asked, straining my eyes on the horizon.

"Toward your left. Do you think you can make it?"

"Colthar is a port city. I learned to swim before I could walk. It's far, but I'll make it."

"You remember what I told you to do? I'm counting on you."

16. This nutrient solution can be synthesized by a sage skilled in alchemy, requiring a successful "specific task" if a sample of the solution is provided or an "exacting task" if only an egg is provided for study (although the egg will not be damaged by this). A full 200 gallons of the nutrient solution is required to hatch and grow an egg into an infant devourer at a cost of 5 gp per gallon.

17. At any given time, a devourer is gestating as many eggs in its stomach as it has mouths. Every egg immersed in the nutrient "mud" from a devourer for three months has a 10% chance of hatching into a larva. These larvae must be kept in the solution for six more months, during which time they ingest all unhatched eggs using the "residual" mouth mentioned earlier. At the end of this time, the larvae's first *bag of devouring* becomes functional and the devourer can feed itself. It is expelled from the parent, and the residual mouth seals itself.

18. An attack on the interior of the stomach makes the devourer convulse in pain. All characters are forced through the rest of the digestive track and subjected to 5 rounds of acid attacks. Afterward, they are free of the creature and find themselves on the devourers' home plane.

19. There is a 99% chance that an encountered devourer lives on its home plane and a 1% chance of its being "cultivated," as in the Keeper's tale.

20. If a devourer has thirty or more *bags of devouring*, the DM should roll percentile dice. On a roll of 1–40, the beast has a humanoid village on its back. Structures made of bone and driftwood provide some shelter from the sun, but not much. A village will have 4d10 humans (1–2 on a 1d6 roll), orcs (3 on the roll), goblins (4), or elves (5–6). All fight as 2nd-level fighters, although each tribe has a chief who fights at 5th level. Such skills are required for a cannibal to survive to adulthood.

On a percentile roll of 41–70, the DM should set up a "special" encounter instead of a village. Good examples would be a few low-level undead, a lone troll or ogre, or a mated pair of griffins. The DM should explain how the creatures survive (undead don't need food, the ogre can swim from the shore, while the griffins raid passing villages, and so on).

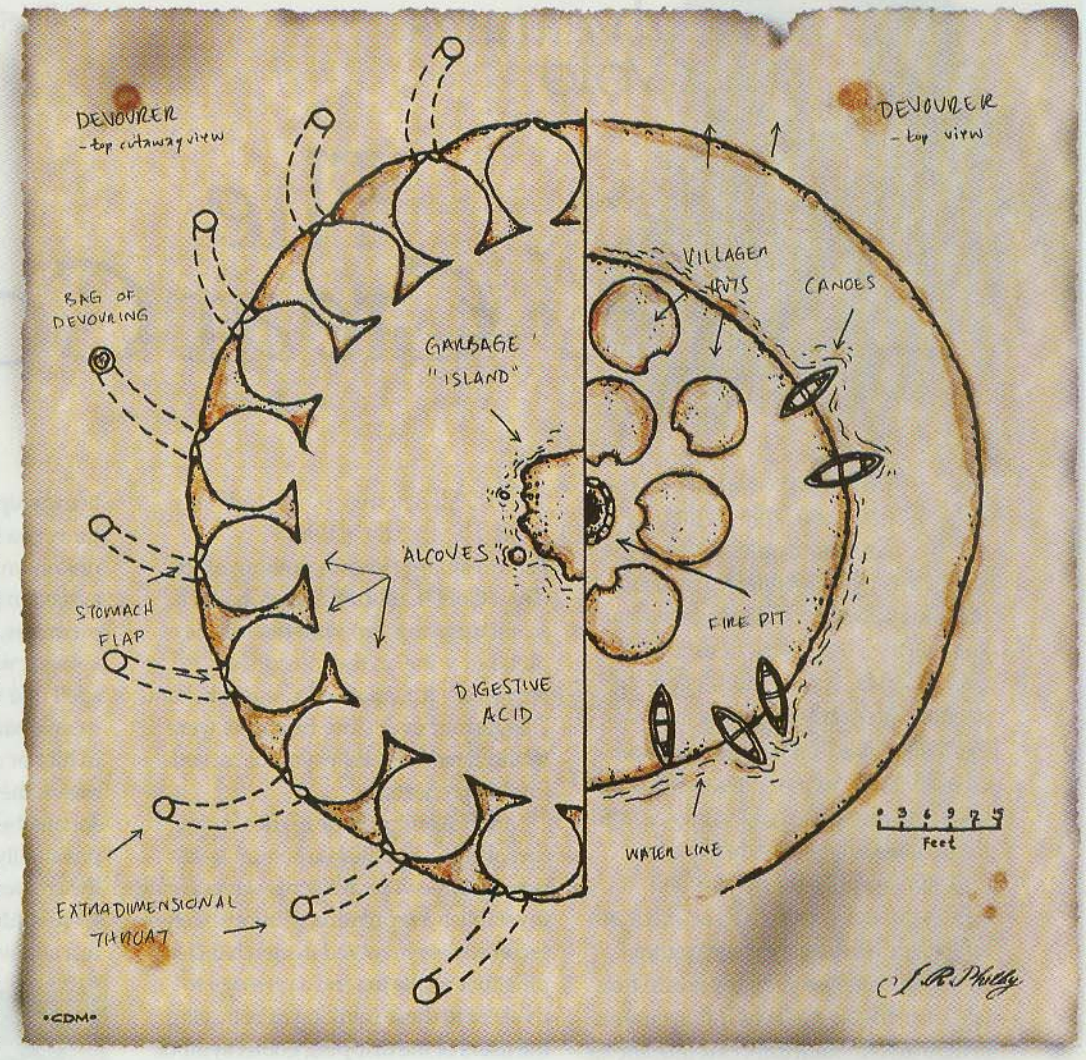
Percentile rolls of 71–00 indicate nothing living on the devourer's back.

21. The villagers are indeed cannibals, having no other sources of food except devourer flesh, seaweed, and (rarely) one of the few fish that live in the briny sea. They immediately attack any other creatures they see, eager to improve their diet. They are armed with spears and clubs, and (when possible) fight to subdue their foes for feasting rather than killing them immediately. If a captive is taken alive, the cannibals usually take several days to finish him off, as they lack any way to store leftovers.

There was a hint of worry in Philby's voice. As a ghost, he was bound to the devourer and couldn't go farther than a stone's throw from the beast.

I stripped down to my breeches, said my farewell, and dove into the sea with my sword and pack lashed to my back. Took an entire morning to get there. Swim and rest. Swim and rest. At least it was easy to float in that brine. After about four miles I reached my destination, sunburned and exhausted.

It was a baby devourer, no larger than a hay wagon. Its skin was thinner than that of the older beast, and I hacked my way in.[22] It covered me with ichor, but I was wearing the ring and finally reached its stomach. Fatally wounded, the creature started to sink.[23] It only had two throats, unlike the twenty of my previous host. I picked one and sawed through the thin muscle flap. I crawled through, followed by a flood of seawater, emerging from a bag of devouring into the bedroom of a very surprised merchant in the glassblowers' quarter ...[24]



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"Sir?"

The old man started, realizing that he'd trailed off as he told his tale, lost in forty years of memories.

"What?"

"Regrets, sir," repeated the apprentice. "I asked whether you have any regrets."

"About becoming an honest man?" laughed the Keeper. "Not a one. If I hadn't botched that burglary and gotten myself swallowed, I'd never have become the Keeper. I wouldn't have met my beloved Melissa, had children, grandchildren.

"No, lad, I'm glad I came to this plane, even knowing that I'd never find my way home, and I'm glad I met Philby. Why, he made me rich! I think he was right, that my work here proved his studies had a practical use, proved that miserable guildmaster wrong. I only hope that was his 'unfinished business' and that his spirit found peace."

The Keeper sighed, staring out at the bustle of activity below. His bookkeeper sat at a table in the midday sun, counting out a pile of coins and entering the sums in a ledger. Workmen hauled a wheelbarrow of silver ingots down the pier, the planks creaking under the weight. Apprentices in protective suits climbed through the hatch grafted into the side of an adult devourer, moored to the pier like a derelict ship. And watching over everything were his guards, protecting not only the treasure but also his three beloved devourers.

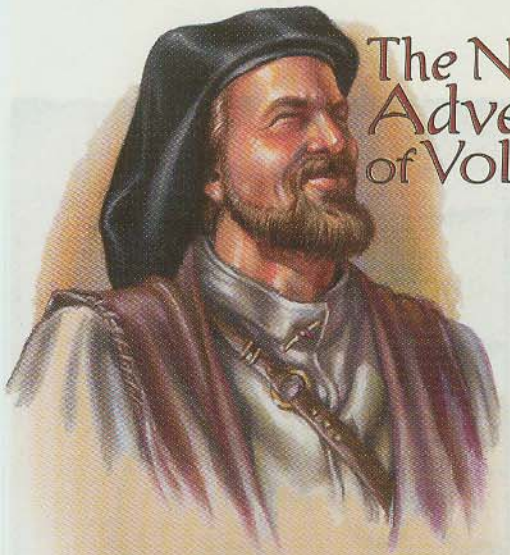
"But, most of all," said the Keeper of the Devourers, imparting a final thought on his apprentice, "I'm glad I listened to Philby so long ago and brought those devourer eggs back with me when I escaped that creature."

Kevin Haw lives in Southern California with his wife. They have two bags of devouring—a terrier and a pointer.

22. The exterior of a devourer is AC 5. The creature has no exterior attacks, but anyone hacking their way into the beast (by causing enough damage to kill it) is subject to acid attacks.

23. The extradimensional links between a devourer and its *bags of devouring* last 1d10 rounds after the creature's death. After this time, the *bags* fail and dissolve into dust.

24. Realistically, the odds that a particular *bag of devouring* is connect to a given plane are miniscule. However, a merciful DM might decide that a *bag* connects to the PCs' home plane.



The New Adventures of Volo

By Ed Greenwood
Illustrated by Ron Spencer

The Great Goblet

Volothamp Geddarm, at your service, gentles, setting Faerûnian truths before you like flashing glimmerfins leaping from the waves to catch the rosy rising sunlight on their fins. I write now of the Great Goblet, a secretive society of Faerûn. This group is but one of many brotherhoods that work in the shadows for their own profit and elude the laws and attention of kings, lords, and the swords who serve them.

To make public the doings and details of such groups is to court death but before all the gods I swear that I, Volo, shall help my fellow Faerûnians know of the snakes who glide unseen in their midst.[1] Such dark organizations rule realms, set prices that hurt the impoverished in distant lands, and make scarce what should be abundant for all. They do this for their own advantage and hide their dark deeds from the authorities.

As you read, take heed: The Great Goblet is but a trifling child compared to the most powerful, ancient, and fanatical of the secret societies.[2] Some can reach into any corner of Toril, to the planes and worlds past the borders of our world, or beyond death itself to strike down foes and further their ends. Most, however, are more modest moneygrubbers, like the folk of the Goblet I've set out to embarrass here. Wherever you dwell, a group like the Goblet might lurk near. So ask yourself, now: Who really rules your town?[3]

What All Know And The Eye Beholds

Faerûn at large knows nothing of the Great Goblet, though its symbol of a metal drinking cup with two drops of blood or wine on the outside has attracted a little notice in Scornubel and Daggerford ever since brigands were found dead with that symbol carved into their chests.

Most folk think it the mark of some sort of cult—but the Harpers, at least, suspect either a professional slayer trying to establish a reputation or, more likely, a secret society involved in merchant shipping that wants to send a message to rivals or to those thinking of betraying the users of the dripping goblet symbol. In this, the Harpers aren't far wrong.

The History of the Great Goblet

The Great Goblet seems to have begun in Scornubel some three decades ago, when local merchants grew frustrated at the influence wielded there by rich Waterdhavian noble families—influence born of local desires not to lose any business with these nobles. Many Scornubrian traders resented this unpaid-for "reach" into their own local dealings, and evidently a few decided to go beyond the usual Scornubrian harassment of outsiders, which usually consisted of the vandalism of wagons, a little theft of goods or caravan oxen, and the occasional warehouse-torching.

These ambitious conspirators set out to recruit disaffected lesser merchants of Waterdeep—and a few dopplegangers who'd been captured, caged, and were being shipped from Baldur's Gate to the Inner Sea lands for a wealthy patron of unknown interests. The "melting-faces" agreed to join the conspiracy as full members, little suspecting that one conspirator was a wizard who'd mastered a spell that would wrack them with shuddering pains whenever they got too close to him or certain of his fellows. This meant the dopplegangers could impersonate their fellow conspirators but not personally slay and replace them. Two of the creatures who tried to do just that were confronted and slain in front of the rest as a warning.

Elminster's Notes:

1. Gods above, not again! Lady Mystra, save us all!

2. The sort far more capably, exhaustively, and thoroughly explored in the recently released Cloak & Dagger sourcebook, from these jackanapes who style themselves "Wizards of the Coast." Though it must be remembered that any such tome is but a frozen moment in time and grows more dated with each passing day following its release, be it known that even I was impressed. Were he to read it, poor Volo would, I fear, be overwhelmed.

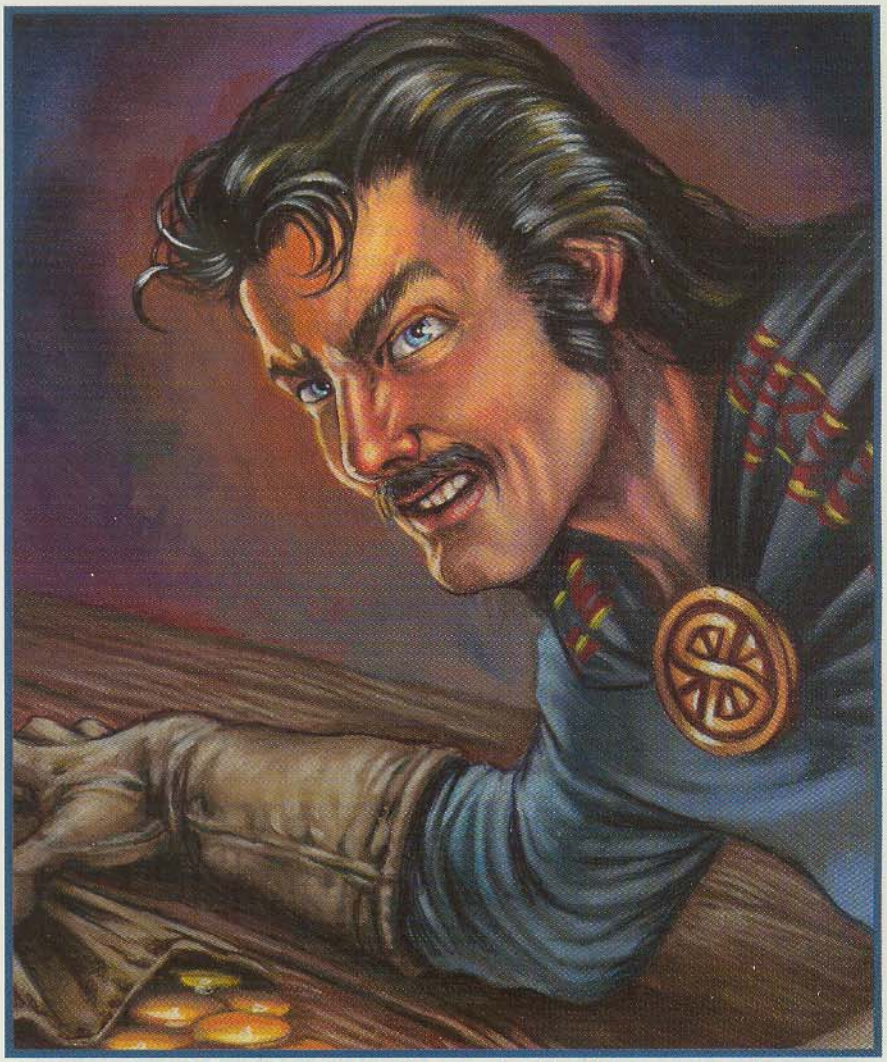
3. Ah, now ye're thinking, Volo. Indeed, even folk happily free of any covert activities in their back lanes or front parlors would do well to ask themselves this little question: Who truly rules the place where they dwell? Why do they have power? Do they regard this state of affairs as a good thing? A world can never grow better unless we make it so, and 'tis so easy to let the days of our lives slip away and do nothing of consequence, only to be buried and forgotten . . . just another good citizen, or dolt, or nothing (choose thy preferred favorite). Some of us stand up and aspire to a little more, providing endless entertainment for the rest of thee. We could use a little help, know ye!

Several disputes over who should lead the group resulted in sudden deaths ere the survivors settled down to comfortable operations, following a patient principle of preying on particular, targeted Waterdhavian noble families. (Different ones were victimized from time to time to lessen the chances of a concerted investigation being mounted in the City of Splendors.) Goods shipped overland south or east in trade by target families were intercepted by the conspirators in Scornubel and replaced by inferior copies of equivalent goods. The conspirators then retained "the good stuff" for sale elsewhere.

When suspicions grew, the conspirators took to hiring brigands, who were never told who they were working for, to stage robberies of the caravans. These bandits only dealt with dopplegangers who were wearing a variety of assumed shapes chosen to make any Waterdhavian spies think there was treachery in the ranks of the nobles' household servants.

The Waterdhavian victims responded by hiring adventurer-mages to pose as caravan-warriors and surprise the thieves. Foiling these journeyman mages increased the power and influence of one leading conspirator, the wizard Halonidas Dreie. He began to give orders as if he were the undisputed leader of the group. This led to several bitter confrontations with other founding members. Halonidas prevailed in the first three of these conflicts (his challengers lost their lives), but his cruelties to his own apprentices proved his undoing in the end. Surviving conspirators co-opted the two most unhappy apprentices, the sisters Glaratha and Ileldra Starntempest, to betray their master.

When that struggle came, Halonidas, completely surprised by his lady apprentices' attacks, was drowned in his own bathing pool. The nine survivors met over his corpse to establish a "new order" for the group and chose a set of golden goblets from the wizard's riches as their symbol. Each conspirator took a goblet with a finger or toe from the wizard's body in it as a grim reminder of what treachery brings. Henceforth, a council of all nine of them—nine lesser goblets acting in unison to create an imaginary "Great Goblet"—would decide matters for the conspiracy.



Dornyn is a less than honest merchant with no scruples, and a possible source of unrest in the Goblet.

The unused extra goblets and remains were locked away for future use, in case another partner should be invited to join. The Great Goblet has always harbored a dream wherein a Waterdhavian noble house is enticed into joining the group, exploited for hopefully a decade or more, and then used as a scapegoat if Goblet activities are discovered.

Several of these nine new leaders of the Goblet were veteran merchants. All of them saw the benefits of expanding operations onto more legitimate and subtle means of making coin, such as leasing land for rent, complex trading arrangements to discourage Harpers and other meddlers from investigating Goblet activities too swiftly and easily, and so on. Forthwith, the Goblet began branching out into new deeds and interests, a process that continues today.

The Great Goblet Today

The nine leaders worked out a complex system of rules and rights to protect each of them from treacheries of the others. These regulations apply to them but not to their underlings, who know nothing of it; I was unable to learn specifics of this bond. Like all such agreements, it has the lasting strength of a dry leaf in a lit fire-grate, but seems to have survived thus far because the nine Lords of the Goblet have the unusual talents of patience, foresight, and a greater love of lifelong advantages than for personal supremacy.

Be aware that I was unable to learn all that much about the nine; what's here is accurate, but crucial facts are missing. I've listed them in roughly descending order of influence, but I might have the ranking wrong—moreover, such things seldom remain unchanged for long.

Ileldra enthusiastically participates in Goblet schemes whenever called upon.

Ilverr Glaengath is a veteran merchant with white hair, a weathered face, and an authoritarian, almost aristocratic bearing. The eldest and shrewdest of the nine, he's the closest thing the Goblet has to a true leader, and he chairs most meetings of the Lords. The others both respect and fear him, but as he thinks of their mutual safety first and seems to have no schemes of his own, they're content to let him lead in most matters.

Glaengath is a short, burly human male known to the public as a textiles dealer (draperies and rugs), with homes and offices in Scornubel, Elturel, and Waterdeep (North Ward). He has a passion for breeding, owning, and riding good horses, and he has begun buying herds and their breeding-farms with an eye to dominating warhorse sales to Amn, Tethyr, Cormyr, and (more realistically) mercenary companies active in the Heartlands.

Bleveth Carduth is a huge, cold-eyed, blustering mountain of a merchant with an uncanny memory for faces, names, and overheard utterances. These talents served him well in hiring caravan guards, bodyguards, and mercenaries over two decades in Elturel. (Persistent rumors of kidnappings and slave-trading were never proven.) Suspicious of everyone, Carduth is constantly busy arranging escapes, fallback plans, diversions, and "cover schemes" for himself, and he never appears in public without several guards, covert as well as obvious hireswords.

Widely feared and hated among rival traders in Elturel and, increasingly, in Scornubel, Carduth maintains a high public profile in his new pursuit as a moneylender, but he still quietly arranges the hiring and equipage of bodyguards for nervous clients. He's widely (and correctly) believed to have many spies and to know all that goes on in Elturel and Scornubel.[4]

Dornyn Malaunger is a probable source of future unrest in the Goblet. He's one of those young, ambitious schemers with boundless energy and no scruples, who, as a less than honest merchant, has leaped from one line of business to another dozens of times in the last decade. Too fiery of eye and sharp of manner to be as attractive as his looks would suggest, he thrusts his tousled hair and exasperated manner through life like a ship cleaving racing waves and always hungers to be "in the know" and "at the heart of things." This leads him to smash cabals and conspiracies he isn't part of whenever he detects them and to race about sniffing out new wares and pursuits, never concentrating on any one thing for long.

Malaunger has a taste for dashing clothes; women who share his taste for haste, intrigue, and danger (though woe betide any who think to deceive or steal from him; he'll break a bed-partner's neck in an instant if he suspects her of any stance against him or his interests); and collecting enchanted swords. He dreams of protecting himself with an invisible flying squadron of magical blades at all times, though he first must find a wizard he can trust to create the swords he desires, or at least uncover all the properties of the blades he's managed to collect thus far.

Hammar Breskult is a tall, calm, spade-bearded, and mightily-muscled former mercenary captain. The best warrior among the Lords and perhaps in the entire Goblet, both personally and as a battlefield strategist, Hammar is seldom without his scarred and rusting suit of field plate, his great warsword, and several more daggers than one might expect—as several challengers have learned to their cost. He's wise in the ways of both swindles and the dirty tricks of combat. Free of magic or overwhelming odds, Hammar could easily best any of his fellow Lords in battle—and they know it.

Glaratha Starntempest is a fierce, tangle-haired, almost gruff young woman who obviously remembers the caresses of her former master, Halonidas, with fury. She's bent on girding herself with such powerful defensive magics that no man will dare approach her or try to command her. Gaining ever more magic is her burning desire.

However, she enjoys the company of most of her fellow Lords because they treat her as an equal and defer to her ideas about magic. Though both Glaengath and Breskult are forever cautioning her to subtlety and the art of working unnoticed, she accepts their advice whereas similar chiding from others makes her flare into open anger. Glaratha is never unprotected and usually wears a small arsenal of wands (many of them beneath her outer clothing), rings, and enchanted bracelets—and she won't hesitate to use them (as magic saved for later might be too late).

Ileldra Starntempest is Glaratha's quiet, dark-haired, slender, and stunningly beautiful younger sister. She might well be a more accomplished mage than her louder elder sibling. She seldom voices opinions, devoting herself to magical study, but enthusiastically participates in Goblet schemes whenever called upon—including acting as a decoy of the helpless or wanton woman sort. Most of the male Lords have had brief, discreet affairs with her and regard her fondly; were her sister not on the scene, several of them would either be sharing her affections or have come to blows over her. For her part, Ileldra enjoys men as she finds them, allows no one to gain a hold over her,

and drifts along taking life as she finds it. If the Goblet were shattered and all her riches torn from her, she'd consider that chapter of her life closed and calmly move on to something else; to her, no friend, place, ideal, or chance of enrichment is worth dying for.

Durrusk is the older and more dominant of the two surviving doppelgangers among the nine Lords, and it almost always wears the shape of merchants it has slain. Slightly larger and stockier than its fellow doppleganger lord, Durrusk keeps its own counsel and volunteers little—though in meetings, it fills in details and supports ideas of others with quick intelligence.

Adelbran is the other doppleganger Lord, about whom I was able to learn precisely—nothing. Adelbran says little and hides much.

Jossok Kaulder is the only true thief among the Lords. Certain sources describe him as a lithe, nimble-fingered pickpocket and knife-hurler, smooth-tongued and both persuasive and quick to rage … but that's all I know of him.

These nine have established agents in a dozen towns and cities in the Heartlands and spies in dozens more. Not counting those who serve only as eyes and ears for the Goblet, the conspiracy can muster almost two hundred folk who know whom they serve, benefit thereby, and feel some sense of dedication to the organization (though they are deliberately kept in the dark as to the identities of the nine Lords and as many other fellow Goblet agents as possible, as well as all Goblet activities they don't have a direct hand in).

A tiny line drawing of a goblet is sometimes used as a temporary sign or recognition device. Goblet agents more often mark themselves to be recognized by fellow conspiracy members by smearing blood, dye, or rouge in two lines down one of their cheeks.

Goblet passwords have included the phrase "I'm looking for a lass called Jolorna," which can be answered in a couple of ways. The phrase, "Aren't we all?" means "Danger!" or "We're being watched," and in either case means "Find me later." The response, "That wench again? She's everywhere, by Tymora's smiling chance!" means either "Good, come with me," or, if the word "smiling" is omitted, means "mission accomplished."

The doppleganger Durrusk keeps his own counsel and volunteers little.

One last code is: "Gods, this boot! Ever since I stepped on that snake…" This strange exclamation means, "I'm of the Goblet and need aid immediately. If you are, too, lead on!" A Goblet member will answer, "You, too? Mine was a two-headed viper. Worse luck! I know a man who's superb at fixing heels, though." The next sentence will either be a "Come with me" bidding or directions to the mythical heel-fixer (guidance to a later meeting).

In closing, I must remind readers that many conspiracies are smaller than the Great Goblet; a few are simply secret agreements on pricing among local merchants who otherwise would never contemplate lawbreaking or underhanded, shady behavior. The Goblet, however, has reached the size where it could explode into open prominence and thereby, through dark reputation, increase its influence. It could also explode apart in rivalries or under the attempts of more sinister groups to co-opt these merchant conspirators. In any case, the Goblet now bears watching.

Ed Greenwood created the FORGOTTEN REALMS® *setting, the wizard Elminster, and bearded Faerûnian dwarven women—but he wants it to be known that it was Roger Moore who created the Giant Space Hamster.*

4. Carduth might well enjoy this reputation, I dispute that not, but let me assure all of thee that 'tis impossible, even for those assisted by the most powerful goddess in all Faerûn, to know more than a third of all the schemes, plots, and business dealings, legitimate and otherwise, going on in Scornubel.

The laughing lasses—ye would know them as the Seven Sisters—recently uncovered a delightful little plot there, as described in passing by Ed of the Greenwood in his book Silverfall, and even now they understand but a tenth of it … and I know rather less.

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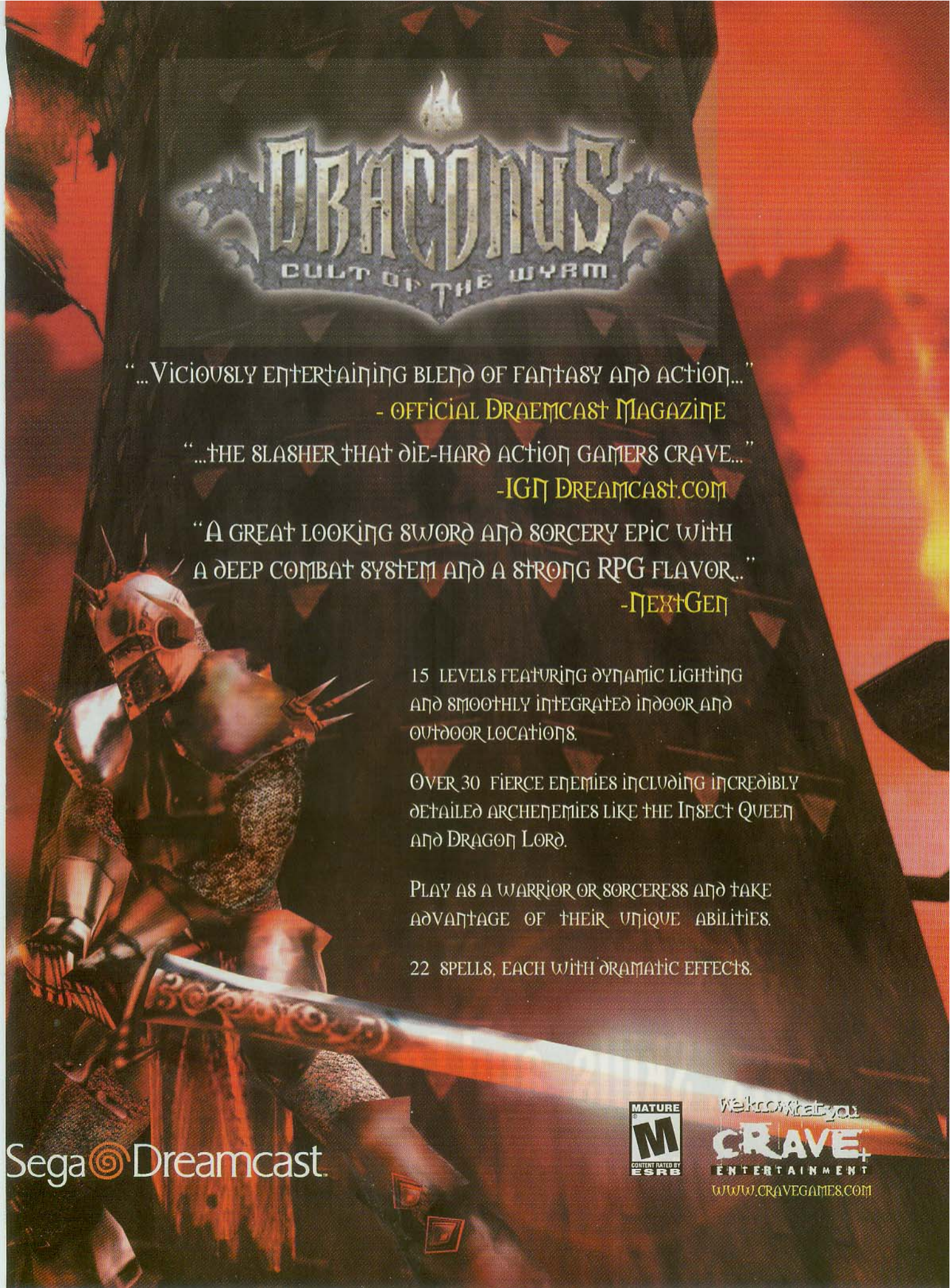
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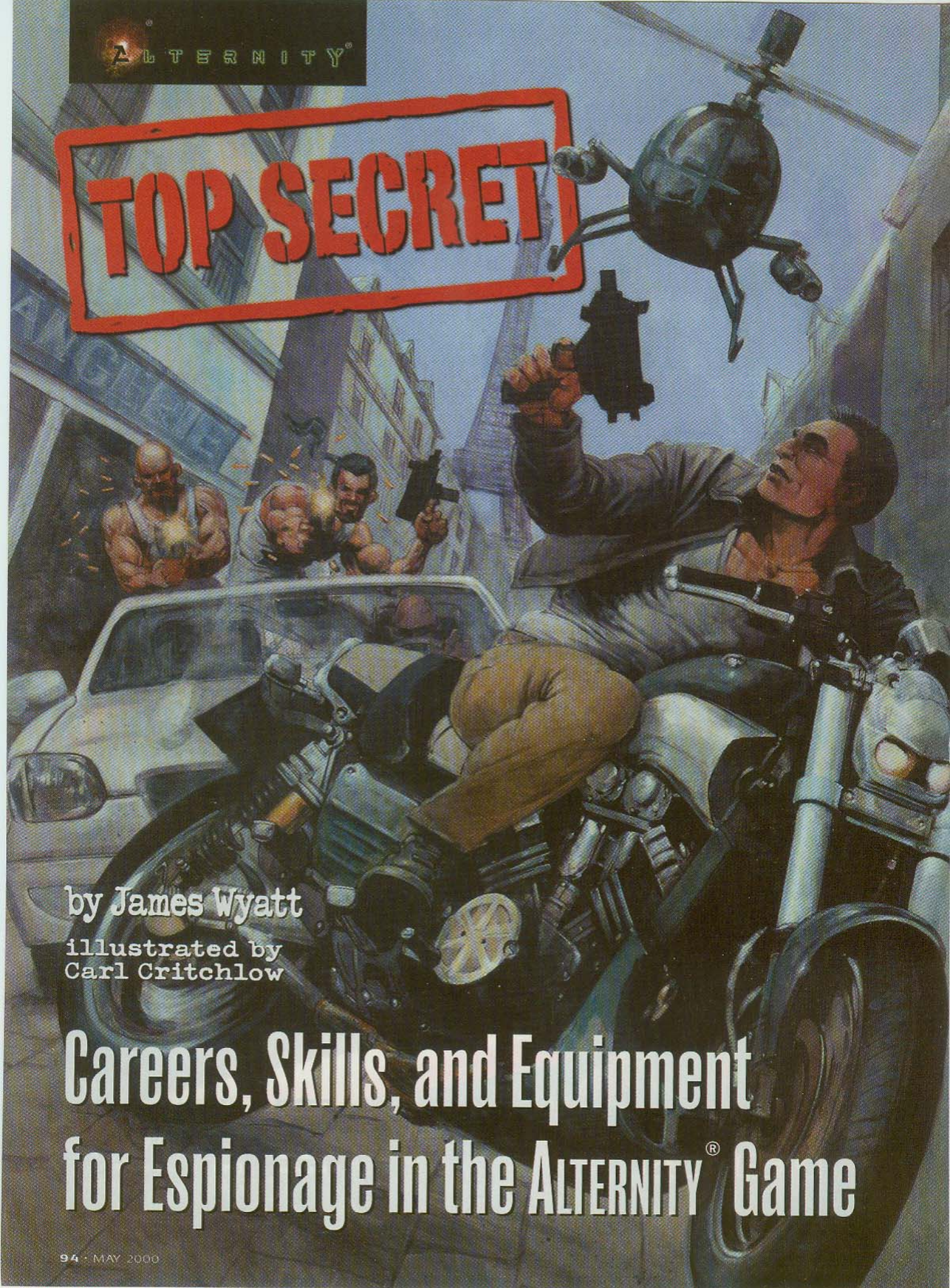


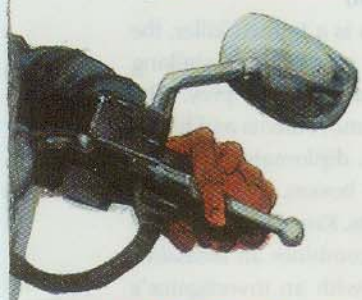
by James Wyatt

illustrated by Carl Critchlow

Careers, Skills, and Equipment for Espionage in the ALTERNITY® Game

The world of international espionage makes an exciting setting for roleplaying—whether it is the mythical world of James Bond, the Impossible Missions Force, and U.N.C.L.E., or the real world of Mata Hari, Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, and the Walker family, or some combination of the two. TSR's TOP SECRET® game, published in 1980, still has its loyal fans, but the ALTERNITY® game is equally well-suited for a campaign featuring themes of espionage—whether set in the present day or the far future.

The DARK•MATTER™ campaign is especially appropriate for espionage action, with heroes working for or against such mysterious and secretive agencies as the CIA, NSA, and others. Whether you play in a Bond-style "spy-fi" campaign, a hard-hitting realistic espionage campaign, or a conspiracy-shrouded campaign with aliens and magic like the DARK•MATTER setting, you can use these careers, skills, and equipment to help you create a hero to stand among the great secret agents of fact and fiction.



The Espionage Campaign

Like any other science-fiction campaign, an ALTERNITY espionage campaign can fall into a variety of sub-genres and time periods. Your campaign could take place during World War II, with agents stealing and trafficking in military secrets around the globe. Perhaps the fullest flowering of military and political espionage in history occurred during the years of the Cold War, which became the classic setting for much spy fiction. A contemporary espionage campaign could have several different themes: military, anti-terrorism, corporate spying, or conspiracy (like the DARK•MATTER campaign). You could also construct a near-future espionage campaign that involved conflict between humanity and an alien race that has arrived in our solar system, military espionage in World War III, or whatever else you can imagine.

Espionage activities can be classified into three broad categories: intelligence gathering, counterintelligence, and covert action. Intelligence gathering involves a broad spectrum of activities: sifting through satellite photographs, reading foreign newspapers, monitoring telephone taps, and infiltrating a foreign embassy to steal secret files. The purpose of intelligence gathering is to provide evaluated information to political decision-makers, whether they are heads of state or agency administrators. In 1981, President Reagan issued an executive order defining the intelligence-gathering function of the U.S. intelligence system as: "Provid[ing] the President ... with the necessary information on which to base decisions concerning the conduct and development of foreign, defense, and economic policy..." (Executive Order No. 12333, December 4, 1981). In a military campaign, intelligence gathering generally focuses on troop movements, enemy capabilities, and key locations. Corporate spies, naturally, gather intelligence about their competitors' products and trade secrets. An anti-terrorist agency would focus on gathering information about terrorist groups, their leaders, and their activities.

Counterintelligence is the important task of protecting secrets—military, corporate, and so on—from competing intelligence agents. An important part of this work is monitoring the activity of other espionage organizations and detecting their operatives. The former KGB's Third Chief Directorate was responsible for internal security and might have included the notorious Smersh—the "death to spies" organization of trained assassins that so often opposed James Bond.

Covert action is the most controversial and dangerous form of espionage activity. Covert projects might include direct intervention in the political or economic affairs of another country through assassinations, paramilitary operations, military training and funding of insurgent forces, and similar activities. Naturally, corporate spies might engage in covert action as well—sabotaging competitors' equipment or facilities, for example, or even killing key figures. Nearly all covert action of this type is illegal, although government agencies can conduct these affairs with little fear of legal reprisal.

Within this broad framework of espionage activities, agents might be assigned to a variety of specific missions: assassination, protecting a defector, bombing or sabotage, hijacking, theft, planting false information, surveillance, tailing, delivering a message, rescuing a prisoner or hostage, recovering stolen goods or information, or any number of activities.

Espionage Careers

In an espionage campaign, most agents are members of the Free Agent profession, though Tech Ops also have important roles in a spy organization. Combat Specs and Diplomats (usually with Free Agent as their secondary career) have their uses as well. What the sample careers in the ALTERNITY *Player's Handbook* lump together under the single career of "spy" the espionage world classifies into a plethora of different roles and responsibilities. There is some over-

The confiscator relies on stealth to complete her missions.

lap among the different careers, but each one reflects a specialized outlook and suitability for a particular kind of mission. The most effective espionage teams combine agents with different specialties into a highly effective unit.

These careers originally appeared in the TOP SECRET game rules and "Basic Bureaus and Special Agents," in *DRAGON® Magazine* #47, both by Merle M. Rasmussen. The careers follow the format of the samples in Chapter 6 of the ALTERNITY *Player's Handbook*, but many of the packages have a total cost up to 40 skill points. Assuming that heroes involved in "intelligence" have exceptional Intelligence scores, these skill packages reflect demanding training.

Note that any of these careers would work for a hero (or villain) in the DARK•MATTER campaign setting, reflecting a member of the CIA or another real-world espionage agency, or even a specially-trained member of an organization like the Hoffmann Institute. Each career description offers suggested roles in the DARK•MATTER setting for heroes who choose that career, along with arcane skills that are particularly appropriate for such heroes, if any.

Additional careers that might be appropriate for espionage agents include the generic spy described in the *Player's Handbook*, the shadow spy described in *Dataware*, and the field agent described in the DARK•MATTER campaign setting.

Confiscator (Free Agent)

Sometimes a government or intelligence agency needs something stolen. That "something" can be anything from a camera holding an incriminating photograph of a public figure to a prototype stealth bomber. Whatever the object, the confiscator is the agent for the job.

Manipulation and Stealth skills are key for a confiscator as well as Security–*security devices*. Besides these core skills, more physical skills like Athletics and Acrobatics often prove useful in confiscation missions. Business–*illicit business*, Street Smart, and Deception reflect both a confiscator's shady past and help him achieve his objectives. Naturally, combat skills are important as well. In the modern age, where information is a precious commodity, Computer Science–*hacking* is a useful skill, though the wizard career better describes a technical-minded confiscator. Vehicle Operation is also an important skill, both for getaways and for those missions where the item to be stolen is a vehicle in need of a driver.

Signature Equipment: Lockpick set, flashlight, small pistol.

Skill Package: Manipulation–*lockpick* 2, *pickpocket*; Stealth–*hide, sneak*; Security–*security devices*; Deception. Cost: 39 points.

In the Campaign: In the world of the DARK•MATTER campaign setting, there is much to steal: pieces of alien technology, papers detailing dark conspiracies, codes from the gene libraries of the Grays, and spells from the hidden collections of the Vatican. Confiscators are highly prized by organizations and conspiracies whose goals involve the acquisition of any such items or information, including the Rosicrucians, the Hidden Order of St. Gregory, and the Center for Xenological Studies.

Arcane Knowledge: Confiscators with the ESP–*psycholocation* psionic ability are unusually adept at finding the objects they are assigned to steal, while those with Telepathy–*obscure* are more able to escape detection while performing their duties.

Hunter (Free Agent)

While an assassin is a trained killer, the hunter is master of the art of stalking prey—in this case, human prey. The hunter learns the movements and habits of enemy agents, diplomats, corporate executives, crime bosses, terrorist leaders, or other targets. Keeping to the shadows, the hunter combines an assassin's readiness to kill with an investigator's stealth and interaction skills.

Some combat skills are essential to a hunter, though she is not necessarily a sharpshooter. Stealth, Investigate, Deception, and Interaction skills round out the hunter's core abilities. The Awareness and Resolve specialty skills, Street Smart, and Security are additional areas a hunter might consider developing.

Signature Equipment: .22 pistol with silencer.

Skill Package: Modern Ranged Weapons; Stealth–*shadow* 2; Investigate–*track*; Deception; Interaction–*charm, intimidate*. Cost: 37 points.

In the Campaign: In a world defined by conspiracies, a hunter's job is often to learn exactly how much a busybody or enemy has learned, and where he learned it, before ensuring that he learns nothing more. Hunters tie up loose ends

for any conspiratorial organization, protecting its secrecy and eliminating any threats to that secrecy.

Arcane Knowledge: Hunters are shadowy individuals at best, and a hunter who practices diabolism is a dangerous force. Spells like *hex* and *tongue of the damned* serve hunters well in their typical missions.

Investigator (Free Agent)

The archetypal spy, an investigator deals with information as a commodity. A master of surveillance techniques and equipment, as well as deductive reasoning and suave interaction, the investigator trades in secrets: military capabilities, enemy operations, or industrial designs. The investigator is equally comfortable poring over satellite photographs, wading through stolen computer data, and monitoring a wiretap.

The Investigate specialty skills are naturally the bread and butter of an investigator. Use of surveillance equipment suggests proficiency in Technical Science–*electronics*, Creativity–*photography*, and Awareness–*perception*, while face-to-face encounters demand Interaction and Deception skills, as well as the mastery of one or more foreign languages. Stealth–*tailing*, Computer Science–*hacking*, Street Smart, and Culture are additional useful skills. Unarmed Combat skills often prove more useful than weaponry to an investigator.

Signature Equipment: Infrared minicamera, pocket minidisc recorder.

Skill Package: Stealth–*shadow*; Knowledge–*deduce, language* (specific); Awareness–*perception*; Investigate–*interrogate, search, track*; Deception–*bluff*; Interaction–*charm, seduce*. Cost: 39 points.

In the Campaign: Most conspiracies revolve around the control of information. Information is power, perhaps even more so in the DARK•MATTER setting than in our real world. Those who control information—information about the presence of aliens and their technology, information about arcane lore and magic, or information about powerful and influential people—can bend the world to their will. In the DARK•MATTER setting, great conspiracies make it their business to control information. Investigators are therefore important, whether their job is to acquire information to aid or unmask a conspiracy.

Arcane Knowledge: Perhaps more than any other agent, investigators are inclined to dabble in the arcane. Investigators blessed with psionic talents like ESP–*postcognition* or *psychometry* have an edge no mundane detective can match. Voodoo–*Legba rides*, Diabolism–*tongue of the damned*, Hermetic–*familiar*, Judeo-Christian–*visions*, and Shamanism–*question spirit* can give an investigator a unique source of information.

Magician (Free Agent)

The magician puts the "secret" back in "secret agent" as a master of disguise, sleight of hand, and deception. A charming entertainer, the magician can perform the work of an investigator or confiscator right under the target's nose—or provide cover to more specialized agents as they do their jobs.

A high rank in Entertainment–*act* allows a magician to use disguise effectively, which is virtually a prerequisite for this career. Deception and Interaction skills are equally important, and Manipulation and Stealth round out the magician's core skills. Investigation skills are useful, particularly if the agent works alone and not as part of a team. Many magicians have additional Entertainment skills, in keeping with their often flamboyant personalities.

Signature Equipment: ID cards and/or passports, with accompanying disguises and cover stories, for several different identities.

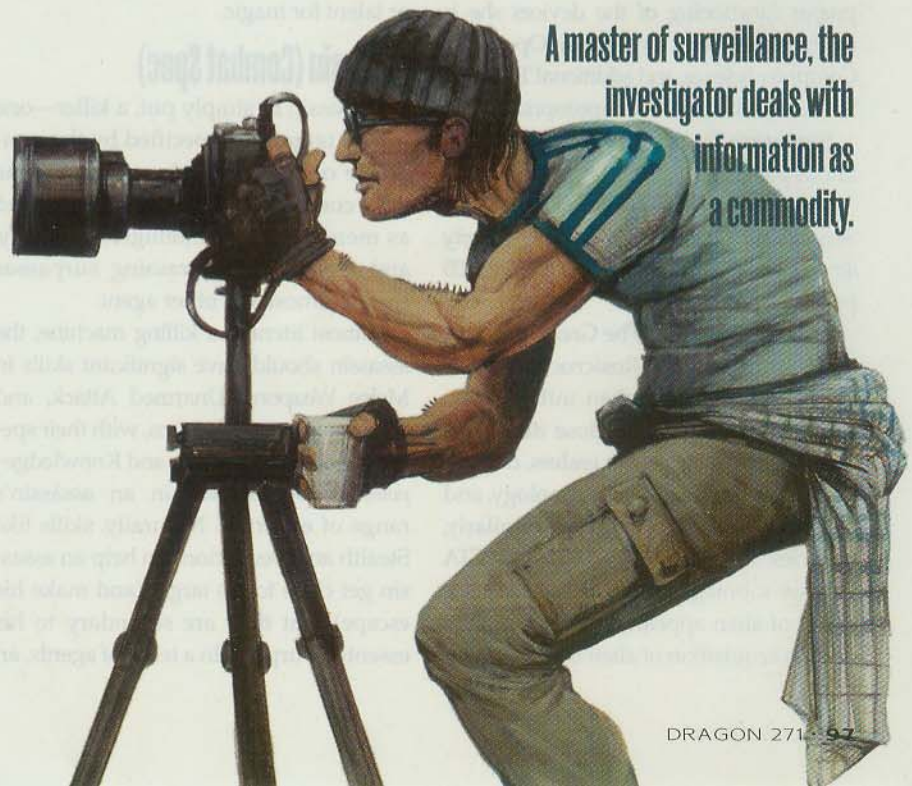
Skill Package: Manipulation–*pickpocket, prestidigitation*; Stealth; Deception–*bluff, gamble*; Entertainment–*act* 3. Cost: 35 points.

In the Campaign: The fabled "Men in Black" are perhaps the quintessential magicians of the DARK•MATTER setting, gathering information and acquiring sensitive objects while concealing their identities and, in extreme cases, altering the memories of witnesses.

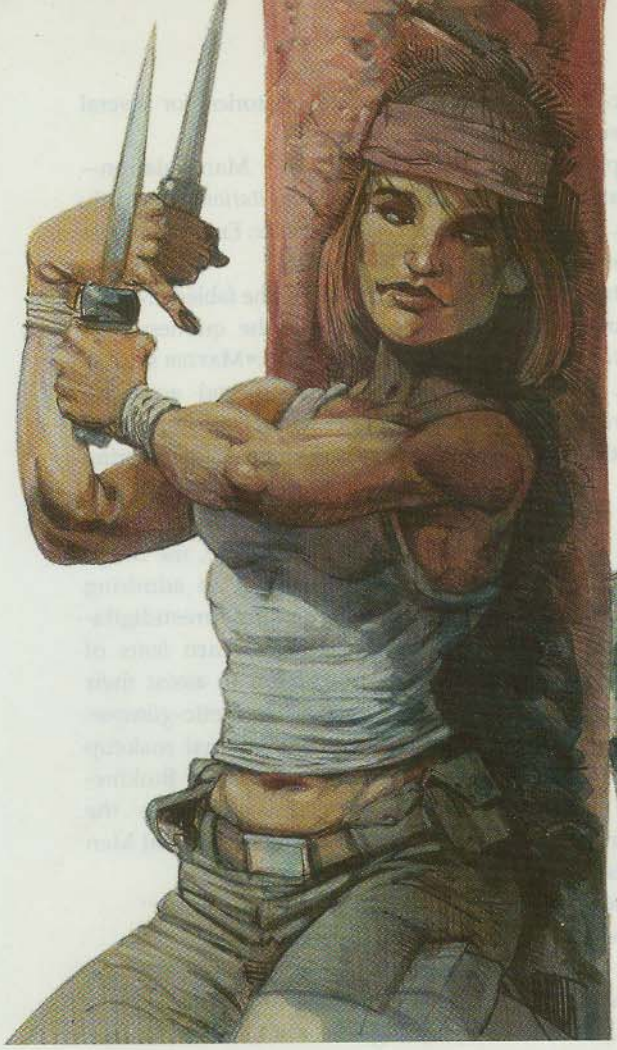
Arcane Knowledge: In a world underneath the Dark Tide, the magician's name is not just an admiring appraisal of mundane prestidigitation. Some magicians learn feats of arcane sleight-of-hand to assist their deceptions, such as Hermetic–*glamour*. Others replace conventional makeup with the psionic disguise of Biokinesis–*morph*. Telepathy–*obscure* is the essential talent of the traditional Men in Black.

Saboteur (Free Agent)

A saboteur's role is to interfere with the proper functioning of enemy assets—dismantling a fleet of bombers, throwing a wrench in counterfeiting presses, or planting a virus in a computer system. Combining a confiscator's knack for infiltrating enemy territory with an assassin's ability to cause destruction, the saboteur is a quick and efficient expert, not a mad bomber.



A master of surveillance, the investigator deals with information as a commodity.



The assassin can expertly exterminate dangerous or unwanted vermin.

Infiltration skills, including Manipulation, Stealth, Deception, and Security–*security devices*, are an important part of a saboteur's repertoire. Once inside, however, skills like Demolitions and Technical Science allow the agent to dismantle or destroy a target. Ideally, a saboteur is familiar with the proper functioning of the devices she is assigned to stop, so System Operation, Computer Science, and additional Technical Science specialty skills are appropriate.

Signature Equipment: Toolkit, demolitions pack.

Skill Package: Manipulation; Demolitions; Stealth; Knowledge–*deduce*; Security–*security devices*; Technical Science–*sabotage*. Cost: 35 points.

In the Campaign: The Great Builders, a sub-group of the Rosicrucians dedicated to preventing alien influence on Earth, use saboteurs to close doorways between Earth and other realms, destroy important items of alien technology, and perform similar missions. Similarly, agencies like the UN, AFT, and CIA employ sabotage tactics to conceal evidence of alien appearances and prevent human acquisition of alien technology.

Arcane Knowledge: Telekinesis skills such as *pyrokinesis* and *electrokinesis* are ideal for the work of sabotage, since they cannot be traced the way conventional explosives can. Telepathy–*obscure* is also a common talent among psionic saboteurs. These agents rarely have any use or talent for magic.

Assassin (Combat Spec)

An assassin is, simply put, a killer—one whose targets are specified by the espionage organization. Assassins are the only combat specialists usually found as members of an intelligence agency, and their military training surpasses that of almost any other agent.

Almost literally a killing machine, the assassin should have significant skills in Melee Weapons, Unarmed Attack, and Modern Ranged Weapons, with their specialty skills. Demolitions and Knowledge–*poisons* also fall within an assassin's range of expertise. Naturally, skills like Stealth and Deception can help an assassin get close to his target (and make his escape), but they are secondary to his essential purpose. In a team of agents, an assassin often serves as the primary line of defense for his companions, so skills like Security–*protection protocols* and Tactics are also beneficial.

Signature Equipment: .44 magnum pistol with silencer, combat knife.

Skill Package: Melee Weapons–*blade;* Unarmed Attack–*power martial arts;* Modern Ranged Weapons–*pistol* 2, *rifle;* Demolitions–*set explosives;* Knowledge–*poisons.* Cost: 40 points.

In the Campaign: In a world of conspiracies, anyone who learns too much is a likely target for a highly-trained assassin. If the conspiracy theorists are to be believed, even the CIA is involved in assassination plots, perhaps even plots against U.S. political leaders. The Hidden Order of St. Gregory trains unusual assassin-monks to destroy alien Strangers. The Japanese cult Aum, the Satanic Final Church, and of course the Mafia all employ assassins prominently in their organizations.

Arcane Knowledge: The most dreaded assassins use psionic powers such as ESP–*mind reading* (the mind breaker ability gained at rank 12) or Telepathy–*possession* to drive their victims irretrievably insane or create the appearance of suicide. Diabolism–*hellfire* is an effective weapon of assassination, while summoning and binding can grant an assassin an ally to do his dirty work for him.

Operator (Diplomat/Free Agent)

An operator is the leader of a team of agents in the field, directing activities and handling administrative tasks. Like a military officer, she issues orders and bears responsibility for the actions of the agents under her command.

An operator's skills should reflect the broad spectrum of activities in which she might be involved. This agent might have basic experience with combat skills, Stealth and Manipulation, Investigate, and Technical Science, but she is unlikely to have high ranks in any of these specialty skills. Instead, Administration–*bureaucracy* and Leadership–*command* reflect the more mundane realities of the operator's job. In addition, Security–*protection protocols* and Tactics assist an operator in directing the activities of other agents, while Awareness, Deception, and Interaction are as important for an operator as for other agents.

Signature Equipment: Personal radio, Marginal notebook computer.

Skill Package: Modern Ranged Weapons; Stealth; Security–*protection protocols;* Tactics; Administration–*bureaucracy;* Leadership–*command* 2. Cost: 40 points.

In the Campaign: Operators are as essential to the field operations of a conspiracy organization like the Freemasons or the Knights of Malta as they are to more traditional espionage activities. Operators often know more details of a team's mission than the other agents—in fact, it is not unusual for the operator to be the only team member who knows the team's true objective (as opposed to what the other members believe it to be).

Arcane Knowledge: As knowledgeable and experienced field agents, operators are perhaps the most likely to have at least some smattering of occult knowledge. They sometimes pick up the basics of Hermetic, Enochian, or Diabolic magic, learning one or two simple spells to complement their other skills.

Mechanic (TechOp)

Similar to the saboteur, a mechanic specializes in tampering with mechanical devices to create "accidents." While a saboteur might simply infiltrate an enemy aircraft hangar and rip the electronic "guts" out of their spy planes, a mechanic's task requires more subtlety. The aircraft could be wired to explode when started up, but ideally no signs of the sabotage should be left behind. A mechanic's work often, though not exclusively, involves assassination.

Key skills for the mechanic naturally fall into the Technical Science broad skill, including both *invention* and *sabotage*. The character might find the other specialties useful as well. Mechanics often work with explosives, gases, poisons, and special devices, so Demolitions and Knowledge–*poisons* are often helpful in addition to more technical skills. Stealth and secrecy are important (skills like Manipulation, Stealth, and Security), as is the ability to escape if caught (Deception, Interaction, and combat skills).

Signature Equipment: Demolitions pack, toolkit.

Skill Package: Manipulation; Stealth; Demolitions–*scratch-built, set explosives* 2; Knowledge–*poisons;* Technical Science–*invention, sabotage.* Cost: 39 points.

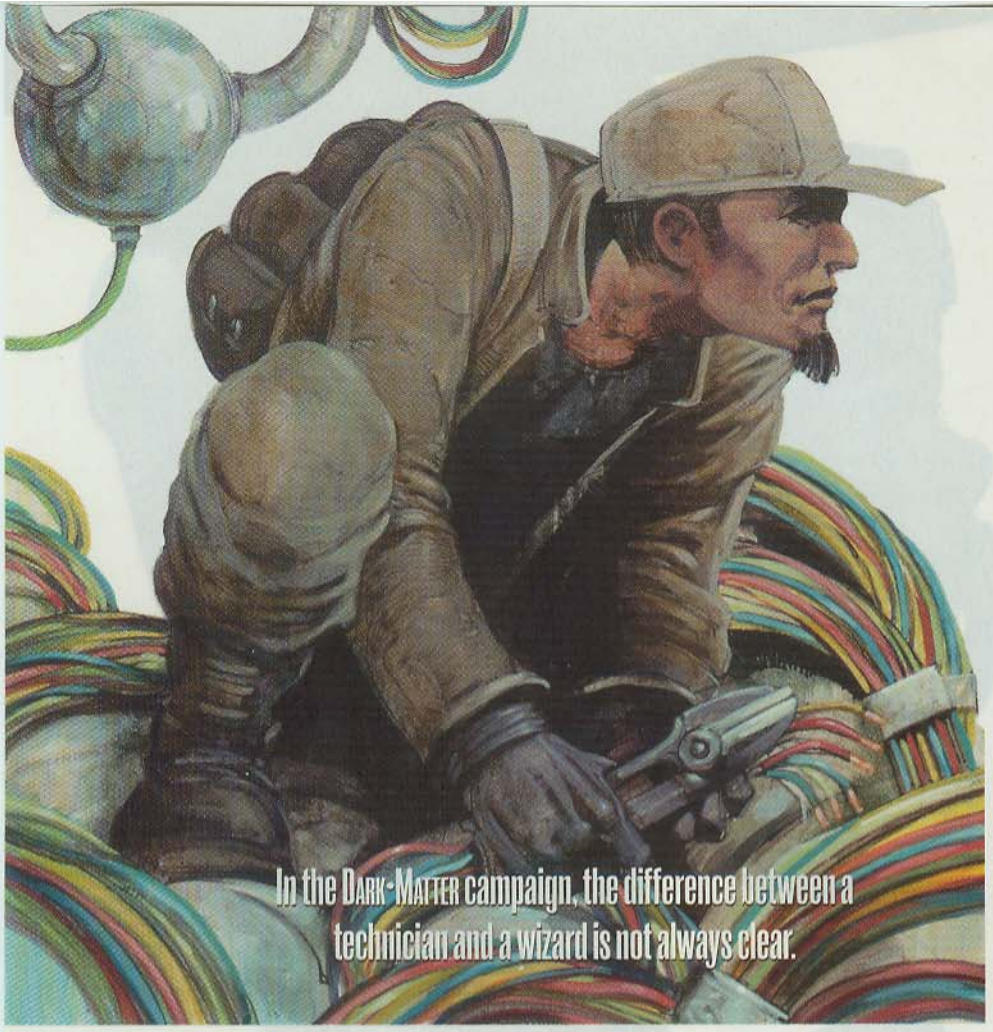
In the Campaign: The sandman agents of the Agency for Foreign Technology are perhaps the most famous mechanics of the DARK•MATTER world, well-known for eliminating anyone who shows too much interest in Project Iota. Of course, mechanics find the same range of opportunities in a DARK•MATTER campaign as assassins, and their skill at making assassinations look like accidents makes them particularly useful to highly secretive organizations.

Arcane Knowledge: Like saboteurs, mechanics blessed with psionic abilities like Telekinesis–*pyrokinesis* or *electrokinesis* hold a distinct professional advantage over their mundane counterparts.

Sleuth (TechOp)

A technical expert with the mind of a scientist and the techniques of an investigator, the sleuth uses scientific methods and logical deduction to solve mysteries and piece together evidence. Wiretapping, code breaking, computer hacking, DNA analysis—none of these tasks are outside a sleuth's expertise.

The wide range of tasks a sleuth is expected to perform call for a wide range of skills: Computer Science–*hacking* for computer system infiltration, Medical Science–*forensics* for the collection of physical evidence, System Operations–*communications* for wiretapping and similar surveillance techniques, and Investigate–*cryptography* for code breaking. In addition, the sleuth should have a knack for deduction, with multiple ranks in Knowledge–*deduce,* if possible, as well as keen observation skills, represented by ranks in Awareness–*perception.* In addition,



Awareness–*intuition*, Street Smart, Business, Law, additional System Operation specialty skills, language skills, and Technical Science suit the wide-ranging interests of this agent.

Signature Equipment: Forensics gear, surveillance gear.

Skill Package: Knowledge–*deduce;* Computer Science–*hacking;* Medical Science–*forensics;* System Operations–*communications;* Investigate–*cryptography;* Awareness–*perception.* Cost: 40 points.

Note: The Investigate–*cryptography* skill is described in the Dark•Matter campaign setting.

In the Campaign: Sleuths in the Dark•Matter setting generally serve one of two functions: They either act as investigators for an organization such as the Hoffmann Institute or the Center for Xenological Studies, or they work as unaffiliated agents unraveling the mysteries of the world's conspiracies and the Dark Tide. The connection between science and mystery that is the sleuth's lifeblood puts such a hero perfectly at home in a world visited by advanced, but secretive, alien civilizations.

Arcane Knowledge: Sleuths tend to believe that science and logical thinking can unmask the deep mysteries of the universe, so they do not often dabble in magic of any sort. Nor are they prone to psionic talent, though a few individuals with ESP skills (particularly *postcognition* and *psychometry*) do exist.

Technician (TechOp)

Many Tech Ops are mild-mannered individuals with careful methods and low-key personalities, but technicians—scientific generalists employed in the espionage world—are accustomed to performing their assigned tasks expertly under the worst of conditions, including under fire. Technicians often work behind the scenes, creating the devices that allow field agents to complete their missions, but duty sometimes calls them into the field, where they generally rely on other agents for defense as they operate specialized equipment, care for agent injuries, analyze chemicals, handle a computer system, or study unusual devices.

Technicians often possess a number of technical broad skills, including Computer Science, Medical Science, Physical Science, and Technical Science. Every Technician has areas of specialization, but a breadth of knowledge is sometimes more important than depth of knowledge in any specific area. Technicians might know other skills, like Vehicle Operation, Manipulation, Security, and System Operation, but rarely have any combat skills to speak of.

Signature Equipment: Toolkit (specialized), first aid kit.

Skill Package: Computer Science; Medical Science–*treatment;* Physical Science; Technical Science–*juryrig, repair, technical knowledge* 2. Cost: 36 points.

In the Campaign: A truly well-rounded technician in the Dark•Matter campaign setting masters not only earthly technology but also advanced alien devices and fantastic concepts. Technicians should learn Technical Science–*xenoengineering* and Lore–*fringe science* as soon as they are able. Any organization with an interest in technology—alien or not—needs plenty of skilled technicians, and science-based organizations or corporations like NASA, the AFT, and the CDC might use Technician agents almost exclusively.

Arcane Knowledge: Relying primarily on a mastery of scientific knowledge and method, Technicians show little interest in more arcane fields such as magic and psionics.

Wizard (TechOp)

A wizard specializes in using technical or scientific means to achieve the same ends as a confiscator—the removal or retrieval of objects or information. Modern technology has made the wizard's role much more interesting than simple safecracking, requiring such diverse tasks as deactivating electronic security systems, hot-wiring vehicles, and bypassing computer access restrictions.

The core skills of a wizard include Manipulation–*lockpick* for the most basic tasks, Security–*devices* for more complex affairs, and Computer Science–*hacking* for entirely digital breaking and entering. True to their safecracking heritage, most wizards are familiar with Demolitions as well, and Technical Science–*juryrig* is useful for hot-wiring. Stealth skills and Awareness can keep a wizard from being detected, while Vehicle Operation and

additional System Operation round out their technical side.

Signature Equipment: Lockpick set, toolkit.

Skill Package: Manipulation–*lockpick;* Computer Science–*hacking;* Demolitions; Security–*security devices;* Technical Science–*juryrig.* Cost: 40 points.

In the Campaign: The East Coast Boys, a society of computer hackers, are typical wizards in the DARK•MATTER setting, collecting information through computer espionage and selling it to conspiratorial groups and other buyers. The Bilderberg Society also makes extensive use of wizards to acquire top secret information of all varieties.

Arcane Knowledge: A wizard's greatest arcane gift is the psionic skill Telepathy–*datalink.* In addition, the Telekinesis–*electrokinesis* skill helps wizards bypass security systems. Like other Tech Ops, most wizards are too grounded in science to pay much attention to magic.

Espionage Skills

In addition to the skills described in the *Player's Handbook*, a handful of additional skills often prove useful to agents in the field. Creativity–*forgery* (which includes counterfeiting) and Investigate–*cryptography,* both described in the DARK•MATTER campaign setting, are often useful to espionage agents. Additional skills are described below.

Survival (Con)

(Found in the *PH,* page 78.) The Survival broad skill focuses on enduring lasting environmental conditions, and heroes might specialize in terrain and climate types. Besides these specialties, heroes might also learn the protocols and devices needed to resist artificial hostile environments, such as those caused by nuclear, biological, or chemical warfare.

NBC Protection

This skill can't be used untrained.

This Survival specialty skill indicates that the hero is familiar with the protocols of survival in conditions of nuclear, biological, or chemical warfare. The hero knows how to use protective equipment, including e-suits, respirator masks, and the like, and can assist others in donning such gear. A successful skill check provides a –1, –2, or –3 step bonus to Constitution feat checks made to resist the effects of radiation, poison, or disease brought on by these conditions.

Knowledge (Int)

(Found in the *PH,* pages 91–92.) Language skills are often important to an agent. The DARK•MATTER campaign setting contains a comprehensive discussion of language skills in the modern world.

Poisons (Int)

This Knowledge specialty skill reflects a knowledge of toxins, from snake venom to mustard gas and everything in between. The emphasis is on administering poisons and their effects, not on treatment or antidotes—the Medical Science–*treatment* skill is still necessary to treat poison victims. However, a character with Knowledge–*poisons* might be able to identify the type of poison used by observing the victim's symptoms. A successful Knowledge–*poisons* skill check provides a –1, –2, or –3 step bonus (depending on the degree of success) to a Medical Science–*treatment* check made to help a poison victim or to a Medical Science–*forensics* check made to identify the cause of death of a poison victim.

When administering poison, a character with Knowledge–*poisons* can make a skill check to impose a +1, +2, or +3 step penalty to the victim's Constitution feat check, depending on the degree of success of the skill check.

Technical Science (Int)

(Found in the *PH,* page 89.) The *Gamemaster Guide* suggests other possible specialty skills under this broad skill, but the one most relevant to the life of an espionage agent is *electronics.*

Electronics (Int)

This Technical Science specialty skill represents a particular familiarity with electronic devices (excluding computers). A character with this skill can attempt to identify the function of an unknown electronic device by examining its circuitry and making a skill check. The size and complexity of the device determines the complexity of the skill check—a simple device might require only a single successful check, while an elaborate and composite device could require a skill check of Amazing complexity.

▼ Increased Effect: As with the *technical knowledge* specialty skill, additional ranks in *electronics* provide a bonus to other Technical Science skill checks (broad or specialty skills) when the hero is working with electronic devices. This bonus is –1 at rank 3, –2 at rank 6, –3 at rank 9, and –4 at rank 12.

Sabotage (Int)

The *sabotage* specialty skill reflects a hero's ability to take devices apart and make them non-functional, often in subtle and dangerous ways. Any hero can smash a sensitive piece of electronics to smithereens to prevent its functioning, but the *sabotage* skill is required to make it malfunction or to create an apparent accident. A *sabotage* attempt is usually a quick snip of a wire or removal of a component, so it requires only a single skill check. However, like *juryrig,* the hero must begin the *sabotage* attempt as her first action in a round and cannot perform any other action for the duration of the round. The result of the *sabotage* attempt is determined by the result of the skill check:

On a Critical Failure, the hero suffers an electrical shock from the device. (See Table G15 in the *Gamemaster Guide.*) The device remains operational.

On a Failure, the hero can't quickly find a way to disable the device but can try again in the following round.

New Skills for Secret Agents

Constitution Skills

Skill Name	Cost	Pr.
Survival	5	CF
NBC Protection	3	CF

Intelligence Skills

Skill Name	Cost	Pr.
Knowledge	3	—
poisons	2	—
Technical Science	7	T
electronics	3	T
sabotage	3	T

Will Skills

Skill Name	Cost	Pr.
Behavior Modification	5	F
brainwashing	4	F
hypnotism	3	F

On an Ordinary success, the device is disabled. Other characters can make an Investigate–*search* check with no modifier to detect signs of tampering and the cause of the device's malfunction.

On a Good success, the device is disabled and a +1 penalty is applied to any attempt to detect the sabotage.

On an Amazing success, a +2 penalty applies to detection attempts.

In addition to this straightforward use of the skill, a hero with *sabotage* can rig a device to malfunction at a certain time or when something is done to it. For example, a hero could rig a car's steering or brakes to give out after an hour of driving or make a stereo system short out when it is turned on. This requires a complex skill check, with the level of complexity determined by the size and complexity of the device. A stereo system would require an Ordinary complexity skill check, a car's brakes would be Good, and a missile launch system would be Amazing.

Behavior Modification (Wil)

Espionage-related organizations are adept at techniques for behavior modification, from swaying public opinion through propaganda to brainwashing their own agents. This skill functions much like the psionic specialty *suggest*, but no psionic power is involved. In the absence of mystical phenomena, behavior modification is a time-consuming process, requiring at least 10 minutes for a simple hypnotic suggestion and weeks or months for a comprehensive program of brainwashing.

Silencer

Availability: Controlled
Cost: $150
Mass/Length: .30 kg/10 cm
Platform: Any rifle or automatic pistol. A silencer, attached to a gun modified to accept it (included in the silencer's cost), stifles the sound of the weapon's firing, reducing its sound category by one (from Good to Ordinary, in most cases). It imposes a +1 penalty to the weapon's Hide value. (See the DARK•MATTER *Arms & Equipment Guide*, p. 73–74 for more information.)

The use of either method of behavior modification requires a complex skill check, though the time between checks varies by method. The target's Will resistance modifier applies to every roll made as part of the skill check, and the Resolve–*mental resolve* skill can improve the modifier. The nature of the target determines the level of complexity: willing nonprofessional, Marginal; willing professional, Ordinary; unwilling nonprofessional, Good; unwilling professional, Amazing.

Brainwashing (Wil)

This skill can't be used untrained.

Brainwashing requires a lengthy program of deprivation and indoctrination. Each roll made as part of the complex skill check requires a week of game time. In between checks, the victim must be confined to a small area (a cell, a room, or a single building) and isolated from the outside world.

If the complex skill check succeeds, the brainwashing imposes a thorough modification of the target's behavior. In essence, the character behaves as the brainwashers want the character to behave, even to the point of self-destruction. Undoing the effects of brainwashing requires an identical process of brainwashing (euphemistically called "deprogramming").

Hypnotism (Wil)

This skill can't be used untrained.

Hypnotism is a simpler method of behavior modification, with shorter term and less comprehensive effects than brainwashing. Each roll made as part of the complex skill check requires only a minute of game time, but the *hypnotism* must be performed in a quiet area, free from distractions. Successful hypnosis has the same effect as the *suggest* psionic skill, with the exception that a post-hypnotic suggestion can lie dormant in the victim's subconscious mind indefinitely until some outside event triggers it.

Espionage Equipment

Agents in a modern-day espionage campaign are generally restricted to equipment of PL 5. Isolated items of PL 6 might appear in the course of the heroes' adventures, either confiscated from enemy laboratories or on loan from the heroes' own agency's research division. In either case, such items usually end up in the agency's hands when the adventure is over.

Of course, an espionage campaign might take place in a different era, and equipment from a different Progress Level might be available. Spies and assassins plying their trade in the STAR*DRIVE® setting, for example, would naturally use cutting edge PL 7 tech.

Weapons and Weapon Gear

Ranged Weapons

Weapon	Skill	Acc	Md	Range	Type	Damage
.22 self-loader	Mod–*pistol*	+1	F	6/12/40	HI/O	d4w/d6w/d4m
.22 ball point pen	Mod–*pistol*	+2	F	1/5/15	HI/O	d4w/d4+1w/d4m
Dart gun	Prim–*cross*	0	F	40/80/240	LI/O	1s/1w/1w + special
Speargun, CO_2	Prim–*cross*	0	F	50/100/250	LI/O	d4+2w/d6+2w/d4+1m

Weapon	Actions	Shots	Cost/25 rounds	Hide	Wt	Avail	Cost
.22 self-loader	3	6	10	+3	1	Com	250
.22 ball point pen	1	1	5	+4	–	Con	200
Dart gun	1	1	15+special	–	2	Com	250
Speargun, CO_2	1	1	20	–	1	Com	150

The darts fired from a dart gun cause insignificant damage themselves, but they are generally used as a vehicle for an insinuative poison or tranquilizer. If the dart hits a target whose armor does not stop the 1 point of damage, the dart's contents are injected into the target's bloodstream. The *Gamemaster Guide* has complete information on poisons. Treat tranquilizer darts as paralytic poisons.

CO_2 spearguns are most commonly used underwater.

The *Player's Handbook* describes many items that agents find useful, from basic surveillance gear to parachutes and laptop computers. Sometimes agents in the field have need of more specialized gear, however, such as IR cameras, silencers, or small-caliber pistols.

Communications

Miniature radio transceiver: To keep a field agent in touch with other agents or headquarters without attracting undue attention, a miniature two-way radio can be hidden inside a commonplace object like a fountain pen. The range is 10 km. Cost: $200.

Scrambler, facsimile: This device guarantees secure communication between two fax machines equipped with the same type of scrambler. Verification features prevent a third party from intercepting and decrypting fax transmissions. Cost: $150.

Scrambler, modem: Like a telephone scrambler, this computer peripheral adds encryption and verification features to a standard modem device, allowing secure computer communications over a dial-up line. Cost: $250.

Scrambler, telephone: This device, attached between the handset and body of a standard telephone, digitally encrypts voice data before sending it over the telephone line. A similar unit must be installed at the other end to decrypt the transmission. Verification systems prevent anyone other than the two parties involved in the conversation from intercepting and decrypting the signal. Cost: $200.

Radio, personal, secure: This compact walkie-talkie unit incorporates digital encryption and verification to ensure the privacy of broadcast communications. Cost: $250.

Sensors

Camera, 35mm: A commonplace camera that stores images on photographic film costs anywhere from $35 for a basic, auto-focus, auto-flash unit to $500 or more for a more elaborate model with a variety of lenses, a detachable flash, and manual focus and settings. Weight is negligible for a basic camera, up to 2 kg for a camera and a bag full of gear.

Camera, Digital: These cameras store images in RAM, flash memory, or floppy disk for transfer to a computer system. Less expensive models suffer from poor color translations and image resolution. Cost: $400–$1200. Weight: .5 kg.

Camera, Infrared Mini-: A tiny camera that translates infrared radiation to visible images stored on film, the infrared minicamera is a staple of espionage work. Cost: $900. Weight: .25 kg.

Metal Detector: Metal detectors are available as a handheld unit (like those used at airport security checkpoints) or attached to a pole for beach-combing. Cost: $300. Weight: 3 kg.

Telescope: Generally more powerful than binoculars, tripod-mount telescopes typically include a selection of lenses and eyepieces allowing magnification from 72× to 675×, suitable for everything from peering into the window across the street to examining astronomical objects. Cost: $300. Weight: 8 kg.

Surveillance Gear: The *Player's Handbook* outlines some types of surveillance gear. Specific items that might be available to agents include:

Microphone, hidden transmit: A tiny microphone and radio transmitter can be hidden inside an innocuous object such as a pen, an appointment book, or a keychain. The microphone picks up the sounds of conversation up to 4 meters distant. The receiver must be within 2 km in order to receive the signal. Cost: $50 above ordinary cost of item.

Microphone, probe: Another tiny microphone, the probe mike is mounted at the end of a flexible probe that can be inserted through small openings to eavesdrop on conversations. Cost: $30.

Scrambler, radio: As described in the *Player's Handbook,* this device prevents radio communication within 3 meters. Cost: $150.

Telephone tap, transmitted: This tiny radio broadcaster is inserted inside a telephone and activated when the handset is lifted from the telephone. The receiver must be within 2 km to pick up the transmission. Cost: $75.

*Though he briefly considered a career in intelligence while writing this article, James is settling into his dream job at Wizards of the Coast. He is the author of "Deepstrike," a Bond-inspired adventure for the STAR*DRIVE® setting, in DUNGEON® Adventures #78.*

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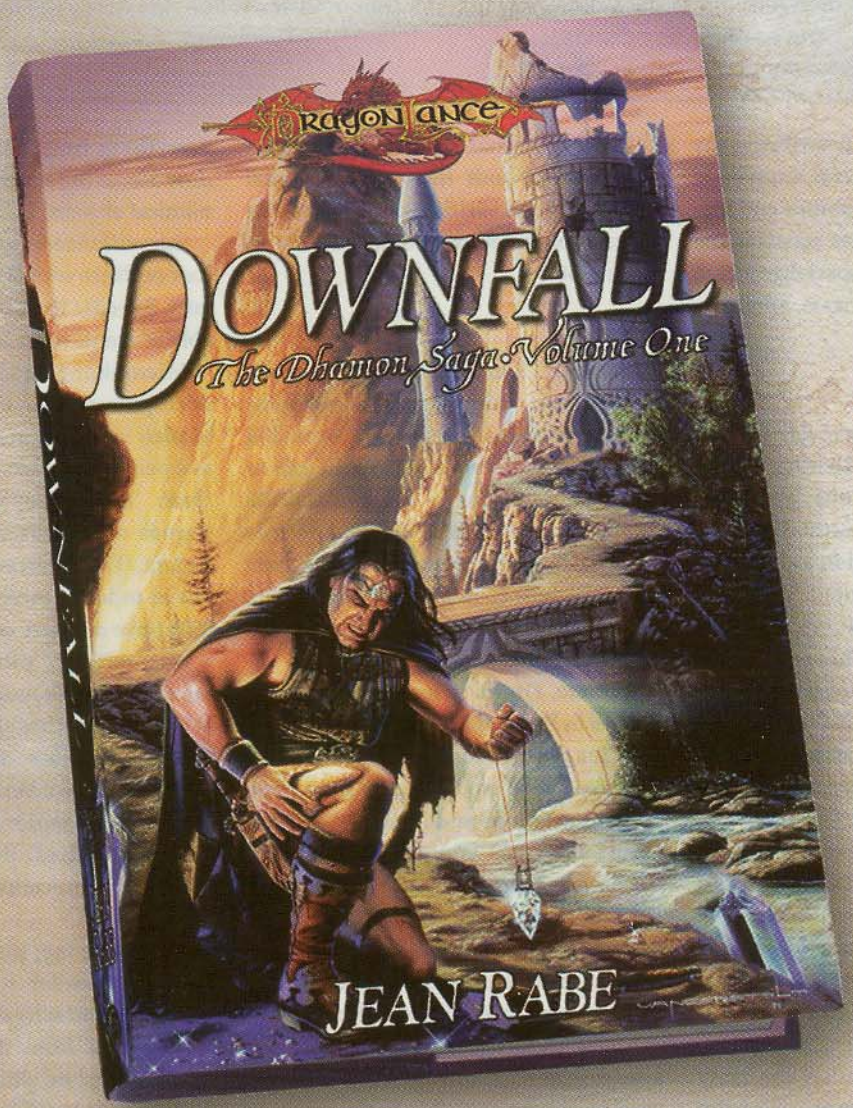

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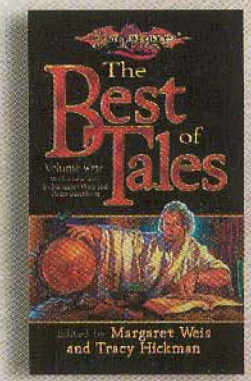

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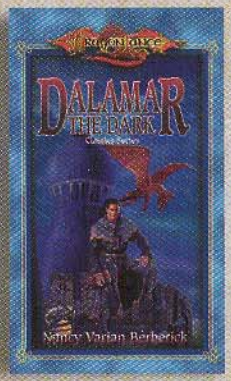

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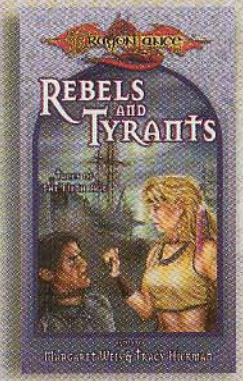

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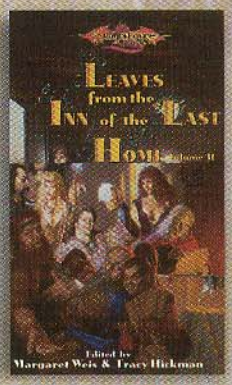

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By Ray Winninger

Cartography by Chris Perkins

Last month, "Dungeoncraft" passed an important milestone. After sixteen installments, we've finally created everything needed to begin a new campaign. These last few months have been pretty grueling—we've drawn maps, devised governments and religions, created some NPCs, and designed an entire adventure. Now it's finally time to get those dice rolling!

The first step, of course, is to locate a group of players. As mentioned way back in the first installment of this column (*Dragon® Magazine* #255), I feel that the AD&D® game works best when you can round up a whole lot of players—say, somewhere between five and eight. Finding the perfect player is an art form unto itself and probably worthy of an entire column some day. For now though, I'll just assume that you have easy access to five or six friends who enjoy each other's company, won't whine when they don't get their way, and won't insist that you allow undead tyrannosaurs as player characters. Once you have them, it's time to begin the process of rolling up characters and preparing for play.

DM Preparation

As DM, you have just a few more decisions to make before you're ready to invite your players to create their characters. Begin by re-reading the character creation chapter in the *Player's Handbook*, paying close attention to the various options it presents. Your first order of business is to decide which class and race options you'll open up to your players. Just because a particular combination is covered in the *Handbook* doesn't mean you have to allow it in your own game. Maybe there's no such thing as a half-orc on your world, or perhaps there aren't any druids. Of course, you don't want to narrow the options too much—players appreciate a variety of choices.

As far as character classes are concerned, unless you're quite experienced, you should allow all of the basic classes: fighter, thief, wizard, and cleric. By excluding one or more of these classes, it's pretty easy to throw the AD&D rules out-of-balance—imagine a world without clerics, for instance (and thus, no healing spells). Instead, pay particular attention to the specialized sub-classes, looking for options that might not fit into the world you've built. If your campaign world is dominated by savage barbarians, for example, a paladin player character might not make a lot of sense. Similarly, depending upon how you see magic working in your campaign, you might want to exclude illusionists and other specialist wizards.

Another good reason to exclude a character class is concern about potential abuse. If you've ever had bad experiences with a particular character class or you think you might have trouble handling any of a class's special abilities, feel free to rule that class out of bounds. An excellent example of a potential concern might be the paladin's ability to *detect evil*. Some DMs find this ability extremely confining and believe that it almost completely takes away their ability to plan encounters that surprise the players. Other DMs find it relatively easy to adjust and handle *detect evil* without a problem. If you fit into the former camp, you should simply prohibit your players from choosing paladins.

These same guidelines apply when it comes to PC races. Exclude any that make you uncomfortable or don't fit your campaign conception. I also tend to weed out a race when I can't think of anything interesting I can do with its culture. For some reason, I often drop gnomes from my games. I guess there's just something about the little beggars that throws off my imagination. Plus, I've always had a difficult time differentiating them from halflings. Of course, your own experiences will vary.

The Cheat Sheet

Once you have a pretty good idea of what you will and won't allow, you should start to create a quick "cheat sheet" for the players. Ultimately, this sheet will contain everything the players

Catch up on past installments of Dungeoncraft.
http://www.wizards.com/dragon/Welcome.asp

need to know about your campaign. The sheet should begin with a brief description of your campaign concept (see *Dragon Magazine* #256) and then a list of all the available character options, including a sentence or two describing how the more outré options might fit into the campaign. Rangers and paladins, for instance, are usually members of some sort of organized society or order. Are there any details about this order that a paladin or ranger player might need to know as play begins? Similarly, thieves are often organized into guilds. Is there a thieves' guild operating in your campaign area? If so, are PC thieves automatically members? When creating this information, don't forget the First Rule of Dungeoncraft. You don't need to generate reams of data about any of these organizations or societies. For now, just a sentence or two will do; you'll fill in the details later, as they become important. The idea is to give the players everything they'll need to choose a character type before play begins. With this in mind, it's certainly a good idea to use this section of the cheat sheet to briefly summarize the options for priest and cleric characters we discussed way back in *Dragon Magazine* #258.

You can take this opportunity to tinker a bit with the restrictions and abilities of the various classes to help them fit into your own campaign. Perhaps in your campaign, all magic-users must be of evil alignment, or all paladins receive occasional prophetic dreams from their patron deities. Although this is a great way to "personalize" your campaign, it isn't something you should do lightly. Again, the AD&D rules are carefully balanced, and it's surprisingly easy to upset the apple cart. It's generally a good idea to keep all alterations as minor as possible and proceed only if you are quite comfortable with the results.

After you've listed and discussed all the character and race options, you should round the cheat sheet off with a brief description of the geography in your campaign area (discussed back in *Dragon Magazine* #261). Here, your goal is to give the players just enough "lay of the land" to understand any references that pop up during play, allowing them to make some educated decisions about where to go and what to do. A single paragraph summary of the local government/economy and a brief list of the major geographic features in the region (each described by no more than a single sentence) should do nicely. You should already have all this information at your disposal. Lastly, if possible, adding a small version of your area map to the cheat sheet is a nice touch. This is particularly easy to do if you created your map on a computer, but even if you resorted to old fashion paper and pencil, you might be able to photocopy your own map and add it to the cheat sheet. In any case, you should make sure that the map you'll give to the players does not include any secrets or other pieces of sensitive information.

Dear Dungeoncraft,

I've noticed that the *Dungeon Master*® *Guide* presents several different methods for generating character ability scores. Which should I use? Why are there so many choices? I'm confused!

—Needs Help in Hanover

Dear Needs,

The Dungeon Master Guide provides a number of different character generation methods because everybody's dice tumble a little differently, so to speak. By selecting the appropriate method, the DM can give the players more or less control over the sort of characters they'll create, and they can cause the players to create characters with lower or higher average ability scores.

Some DMs like the idea of strictly random character types—what you roll is what you get. The major advantage of this approach is that it forces the players to be somewhat creative; some of the most memorable characters result from players forced to make sense of a random pile of numbers, as the players are often forced to adopt new approaches. The strictly random approach also tends to reinforce just how special characters with exceptional ability scores can be, since such characters are comparatively rare.

Other DMs like to give players a lot of choice over the sort of characters they play. The advantage here is that the player gets exactly what he wants, perhaps making it more likely that the player will remain interested in the character. These methods also tend to help the players create a more balanced and capable party.

Exactly which method you choose doesn't really matter. They all work just fine. Pick the one that looks like the most fun. If you're having a hard time choosing, ask your players to vote for the method they'd prefer. (In any case, you should always make sure the players all use the same method or you're bound to have some players with more capable characters than others).

As for the method that I prefer, well, I have a tendency to make everything more complicated than it has to be, so I actually don't use any of the methods presented in the Dungeon Master Guide. I've created my own. I ask each player to roll 4d6 (discarding the lowest) seven times. The player than discards the lowest of the seven scores and assigns the six resulting scores to any abilities they wish. This method tends to create better than average PCs (though not far better than average) and gives the players a lot of freedom to create the characters they want to play. My method is no better or worse than any of those presented in the DMG. Use it if you like it; ignore it if you don't.

Once the cheat sheet is complete, you should make copies for each of your players. While you're at it, make a nice pile of extras—as soon as word gets out about your incredibly well conceived campaign, lots of latecomers will want to join in. You'll find a copy of my own cheat sheet on the following pages.

The Character Creation Session

Once your cheat sheet is finished, it's finally time to assemble all your players and ask them to create their characters. If at all possible, you should always ask the players to create all their characters together as a group—unless you are particularly pressed for time, frown on the idea of the players arriving at the session with their characters already created. In

this way, you can guarantee that the players have an opportunity to review your cheat sheet before they get started. This method also allows the players to consult with each other, allowing them to assemble a better balance of character classes and races.

If at all possible, try to conduct the character creation activities immediately prior to an actual game session. Some DMs like to hold a special session solely devoted to character creation, but I like to make sure the game gets started immediately. I think it's important to give the players a taste of the adventure as soon as possible in order to keep their interest high. I've seen far too many DMs go the other route and never get the actual game off the ground due to boredom and logistics. Over the years, I've learned that the sooner you begin playing, the more likely you are to keep playing.

Once your players have cranked through all the various dice rolls and decisions discussed in the *Player's Handbook*, your final step before beginning play is to give each character a careful once over. Here you want to make sure that you're completely comfortable with every aspect of the character. Pay particular attention to the class and race chosen, as well as the character's spells and equipment. Did the player purchase an item that isn't really appropriate to your campaign? Does the character have spells you're not comfortable with? If so, here's your chance to demand a change with a minimum of fuss. Also, you should use this opportunity to make sure that the players have selected a healthy mix of character classes. If there isn't at least one cleric, one wizard, and a couple of fighters present, you might suggest the players shuffle things around a bit. Such a mix will definitely improve the players' chances and make a "false start," in which the entire party is quickly wiped out, far less likely.

ARIS PLAYER'S GUIDE (THE "CHEAT SHEET")

Aris is a lush world that is almost entirely blanketed in trees of almost all descriptions: tall redwoods, majestic conifers, dense oaks, and lush palms. Because there is so little arable farmland, food can get quite scarce; a number of political factions square off to gain control of the all-important trails that cut through the planet's thick forests.

Another characteristic that makes Aris unique is the fact that most of its inhabitants are certain that the planet itself is alive. Legends speak of living forests capable of forming and obliterating new pathways at will, and strange sentinel spirits that occasionally rise up to defend the forests against incursion. Aris herself is the only major goddess worshiped across the planet.

Character Choices

Most of the options presented in the *Player's Handbook* are open to PCs:

Fighter

Fighters come from all walks of life on Aris: ex-soldiers, jungle barbarians, adventurers and just about anything else you can imagine.

Ranger

Rangers on Aris are fighters who feel a strange sort of mystical bond with the planet-goddess; in many ways, the rangers are special defenders chosen by the planet itself. Although they aren't really organized in any fashion, rangers always seem to recognize each other by sight (even if they've never met before) and don't often refuse a request for assistance that comes from another ranger.

Mage

Magic users of all types (including illusionists and other specialists) can be found scattered across all of Aris, though in most areas they are either so rare or so low profile that some of the planet's residents occasionally doubt whether wizards exist. Sorcery is an ancient and elusive art on Aris, and no worldly creature has ever penetrated enough of its secrets to understand its real origins.

Cleric

For now, all player character clerics on Aris belong to one of two societies: the Children or the Legion. Both societies worship the planet as their only goddess. The Children are made up of good- and neutral-aligned clerics who operate most of the temples in most civilized regions of the world and worship the planet's bounty. The Legion is composed of evil clerics who worship the destructive aspect of the planet's nature. Because it operates like a secret society, relatively few of Aris's inhabitants are aware that the Legion exists.

Services and Tenets of the Children: The Children hold special religious services in honor of the nature goddess during each change of seasons; the clerics of the order spend the rest of their time studying, adventuring, trying to aid members of the flock, and spreading the reverence of the goddess. The services consist of lengthy festivals and banquets attended by most residents of the campaign area and are designed to celebrate the goddess and her bounty.

The members of the Children believe that the goddess's bounty is a manifestation of the good or evil of the world's inhabitants. So long as the flock continues to do good deeds, the goddess will deliver a bountiful harvest, the weather will be mild, and her people will enjoy long, peaceful lives. They also believe that owls are sacred; the owls are the "eyes" the goddess uses to monitor her flock. Clerics of the Children are required to spend one week of each season alone in the wilderness.

Services and Tenets of the Evil Order: The Legion also holds services during the change of seasons; its clerics spend the rest of their time trying to attract and corrupt new followers. The Legion's services consist of human sacrifices, fires, and other acts of destruction.

The clerics of the Legion believe that the Children have blinded themselves to the goddess's true nature. Power and understanding, they believe, always stem from suffering and an acceptance of nature's destructive capacity. Clerics of the Legion are required to kill one innocent per quarter (every three months) to reaffirm their faith.

Druid

Druids on Aris are special priests who devote most of their time and energies to exploring and protecting the planet's forests. Like rangers, they have some sort of strange mystical bond with the world itself. Unlike rangers, they have organized themselves into a strict hierarchy as described in the *Player's Handbook*.

Services and Tenets of the Druidic Order: The druidic order holds a service on the night of every full moon, consisting of chanting and a reading of litanies. The druids believe that the goddess's only daughter (the planet's single moon) will one day take her mother's place in the cosmos; life will eventually die out on the main planet and spring up on the moon. The druids are required to abide by all the restrictions of the druid class listed in the *Player's Handbook*.

Thief, Bard

Like fighters, thieves and bards on Aris come from all walks of life: cutpurses, rogue adventurers, wily traders, and troubadours.

Local Geography

The campaign is set in Ironoak, a stronghold that lies on the fringes of the kingdom of Umbria. Umbria is a noble monarchy surrounded by an uncivilized wilderness that is inhabited by several malevolent tribes of humanoids. One of the kingdom's many claims to fame is the fact that its rulers always abdicate on their 40th birthday and venture alone into the forest, never to be seen again. No one knows why they do this or where they go.

Built within and atop a cluster of tall trees, Ironoak is ruled by man named Richard, the rightful Warden appointed by the king of Umbria. His main responsibility is to protect the kingdom against humanoid incursions that might arise in the adjoining cluster of wilderness known as The Black Wood.

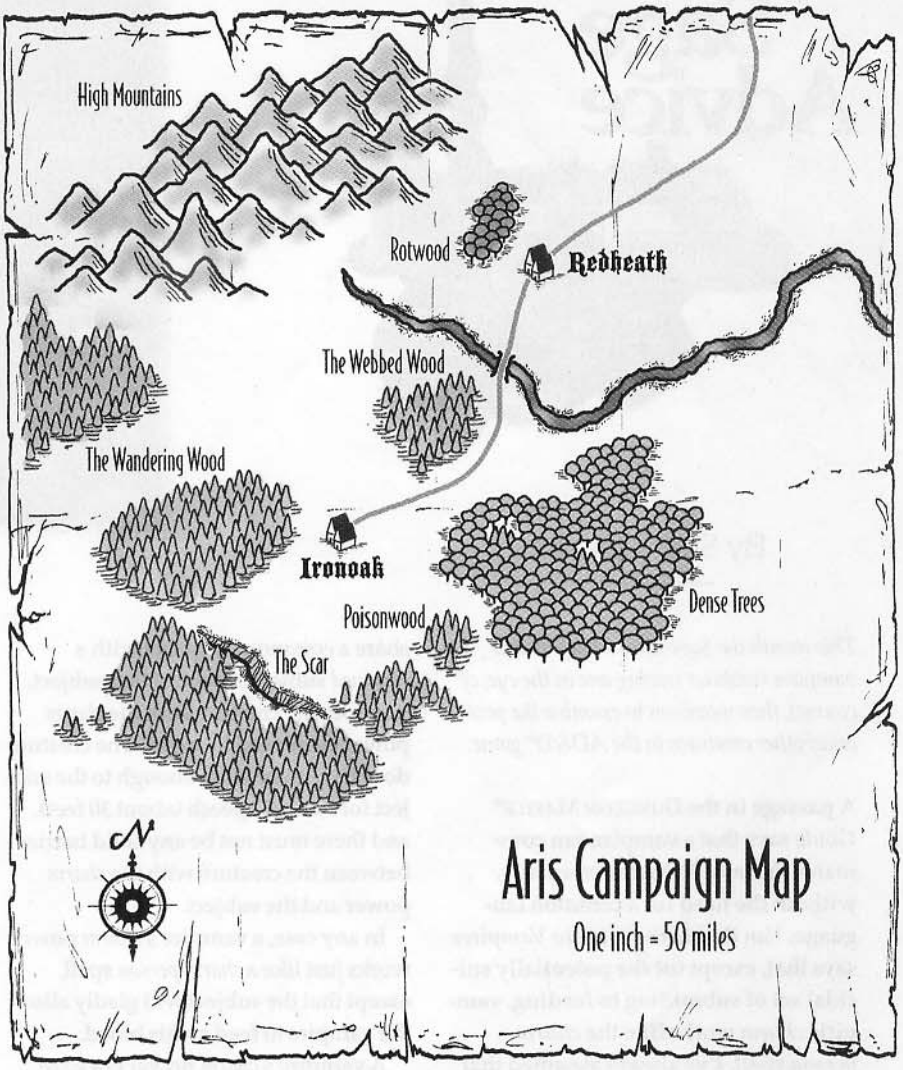
A few points of interest are noted below.

The Wandering Wood

A small subforest located just outside of Ironoak, the paths through the Wandering Wood seem to mysteriously shift and flow. Unskilled travelers often find it impossible to navigate the area effectively.

The Webbed Wood

This small cluster of tall oaks is honeycombed by thick spider webs, causing all but the most intrepid travelers to avoid it.



Although the world of Aris is covered with trees, it's simpler to indicate only those forests that are pertinent to the campaign. The DM should always keep a simple terrain map handy. This map was created in only two hours using Photoshop™ 4.0.

The High Mountains

This rocky, tree-covered mountain range forms Umbria's western border in this region.

Redheath

Redheath is the town that stands closest to the Ironoak stronghold. It currently boasts approximately 1,100 residents and stands as a major waypoint along all the merchant trails leading through south Umbria.

Rotwood

The Rotwood is a cluster of dead and fallen trees inhabited by all manner of strange creatures.

Poisonwood

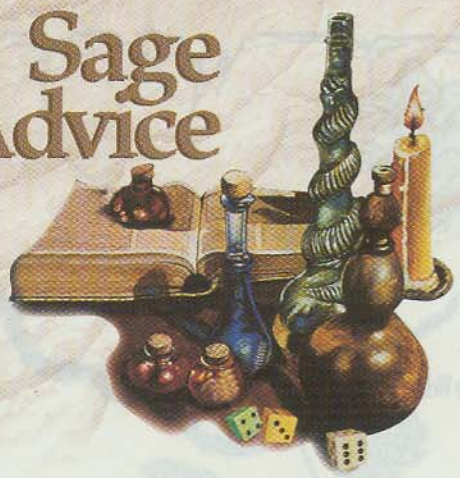
The trees in this sector of the forest occasionally drip a deadly poison from their leaves down onto the heads of interlopers. Although most of the poison trees in the region seem clustered in this area, there are a few scattered at random throughout several of the neighboring forests, making it dangerous to travel through certain areas without an experienced guide.

The Scar

The Scar is a rocky, desolate rift that lies just inside of the Black Wood. It's one of the few areas on Aris that is not blanketed by trees. Local legend has it that some sort of cataclysm formed the scar and killed all the trees in the area several centuries ago.

Ray Winninger knows he's a now a grown up because he actually checks the stock market every single day. Sigh.

Sage Advice



By Skip Williams

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The Sage cannot make personal replies;
please include no SASE with your questions.

This month the Sage takes a long look at vampires (without staring one in the eye, of course), then moves on to examine the powers of other creatures in the AD&D® game.

A passage in the *DUNGEON MASTER® Guide* says that a vampire can command *charmed* followers mentally, without the need for a common language. *Van Richten's Guide to Vampires* says that, except for the potentially suicidal act of submitting to feeding, vampiric *charm* works like the *charm person* spell. I've always assumed that vampires are seen as friends by those they *charm* (as per the spell), but they can also give mental commands within the parameters of what a friend would ask without the victim knowing where the command was originating. Is it possible for a vampire to prompt a *charmed* subject's actions from afar? If so, how far? Would it be possible for a very distant vampire to *charm* someone through a *crystal ball* and then control the subject's actions from afar?

You seem to be referring to the discussion of *charmed* creatures in Chapter 9 of the *DUNGEON MASTER Guide*, specifically the section entitled Degrees of Charm. It's very easy to read too much into that section; a vampire (or other creature with an innate *charm* power) need not share a common language with a *charmed* subject to control that subject, nor does the creature with the *charm* power even need to speak. The creature does have to be close enough to the subject for normal speech (about 30 feet), and there must not be any solid barrier between the creature with the *charm* power and the subject.

In any case, a vampire's *charm* power works just like a *charm person* spell, except that the subject will gladly allow the vampire to feed on his blood.

A vampire's *charm* power is a gaze attack, which requires a direct look at the vampire, not merely seeing the vampire's image in a scrying device.

Can a vampire swim or walk around underwater?

Is it possible for a vampire to move around briefly in the daytime by moving quickly between shaded areas so that it never spends a whole round in the light?

According to the *MONSTROUS MANUAL™* book, vampires become powerless the instant they are exposed to sunlight and are destroyed after 1 round. The *MONSTROUS MANUAL* book does not define powerless. I suggest that the vampire cannot attack, use spells, use its special abilities, or act other than to make a normal defense (no special bonuses to attackers). It can move 5 feet. If the vampire begins and ends a round in sunlight, it is destroyed. It would be possible for a vampire to step into sunlight and stagger out again without being destroyed, but its progress would be very slow. If the vampire tries this more than once in the same turn, have it make a saving throw vs. death magic on the second and any further attempts to pass through sunlight that turn. If the saving throw roll fails, the vampire collapses upon entering the sunlight and is destroyed after 1 round unless someone pulls it out of harm's way.

If you're using the rules for exceptionally powerful vampires, such as those found in *Van Richten's Guide to Vampires*, you can use a similar procedure, but the vampire can tolerate more exposure to sunlight before suffering harm.

Can a vampire swim or walk around underwater? *Van Richten's Guide to Vampires* says that oceans and seas do not count as running water.

Van Richten's Guide to Vampires is pretty explicit about what constitutes running water, but I do not recommend that you use its definition. (It's much too narrow.) Stagnant water won't harm a vampire, but "running" water is anything that has a current or natural circulation, including lakes and oceans.

Is it possible for a vampire in gaseous form to diffuse though an entire house? For example, could a vampire start at the top of a house and let parts of itself seep down into all the rooms? This would allow the vampire to monitor

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conversations in multiple rooms and pick an out-of-the way area to reform when it wished to resume solid form.

A vampire can't use its gaseous form power to make itself as big as a house, or any bigger than its original size.

What are the limitations on the amount of equipment that can go with a vampire who changes form, either into an animal or a mist? Can they carry up to the limit of their encumbrance? If not, how much? If a vampire were to load itself down to maximum encumbrance and then turn into a bat, would it still be encumbered in bat form?

When a vampire (or any creature) changes shape, its encumbrance limit is unchanged. Any equipment it carries still counts toward its encumbrance limit, even if part or all of the load is incorporated into the assumed form. If the creature carries enough to slow it, its assumed form also will be slowed down. Note that the assumed form might have a faster or slower movement rate than the original form; the effects of encumbrance are calculated from the assumed form's movement rate.

How much damage does violet fungus inflict? The *Monstrous Manual* book doesn't say.

A violet fungus inflicts no damage at all. Its touch rots flesh. Any limb the fungus touches rots and falls off in 1 round unless the victim makes a successful saving throw vs. poison. Note that a *cure disease* spell applied before the round passes prevents the rot. If a creature's head or body rots, it dies. When a violet fungi makes a successful melee attack, the DM has to decide what part of the opponent's body the fungus has touched. For humanoids, you can roll 1d6: 1=left leg, 2=right leg, 3=left arm, 4=right arm, 5= body, 6=head. For body hits, you can assume that the victim loses 25% of her original hit points each round instead of dying after 1 round.

I have a Krynnish minotaur who was lucky enough to end up with a 20 Constitution. I have several questions about the regeneration power characters get by having a very high Constitution scores. Can missing limbs be regrown? If not, can they be reattached? Will the regeneration work if a character loses her head? Lastly, can characters regenerate after being dropped to –10 (if the –10 rule is used)?

Regeneration from high Constitution will not allow a character to regrow lost limbs, but they can be reattached. Reattachment takes as much time as it would take the character to regenerate 20 points of damage. The regeneration works only as long as the character is alive (once you're dead, you no longer have a Constitution score), so the character is out of luck if her hit points drop to –10 or she loses her head.

What are the level limits for the sidhe race that were presented in the *Celts Handbook*?

I recommend the same limits as elves.

When a character is killed by an undead's special abilities, such as Strength loss, Constitution loss, or level drain, he usually is transformed into the same kind of undead that killed the character. What happens to the character's equipment? Does it fall to the ground? Is it absorbed into the Demiplane of Shadow or into some netherworld?

If the resulting undead creature is incorporeal, than anything it carries falls to the ground. Corporeal undead continue to wear and use their equipment, alignment permitting.

The *Monstrous Manual* book says a dragon cannot execute any other attacks while using a plummet or pin attack. Does that mean that the dragon, once the pin is executed, can do nothing while its bulk pins its hapless foes, or can it just not claw, tail slap, or kick? I would think it reasonable that biting or breath weapon attacks or spells would be feasible while the dragon sits on its foes.

It takes all the dragon's efforts to keep opponents pinned. The dragon actually has to wiggle around and use its limbs to keep sweeping foes under its body; it does not just lie on top of them.

Does a *holy avenger* inflict damage against a molydeus tanar'ri? The monster description says only cold-wrought iron weapons inflict damage, but I think that the *holy avenger* is a holy weapon and therefore can inflict some damage on this fiend. Am I correct?

If a molydeus was susceptible to holy weapons, you would be correct. However, it takes a cold-iron weapon or a magical attack to hurt a molydeus (and good luck getting through the critter's magic resistance). Making a molydeus susceptible to holy weapons wouldn't be a bad house rule, though. Note that a molydeus is subject to damage from holy water, which is in a different category of attack from a weapon such as a *holy avenger* despite the similar name. Of course, there's nothing that says a *holy avenger* can't be made from cold-wrought iron.

Our gaming group is divided over the meaning of the fiendish hide power from the article on tieflings in *Dragon*® *Magazine* issue #235. Fiendish hide makes the character immune to non-magical weapons (hit only by +1 or better magical weapons). Half of the group believes that "hide" implies that the skin should be repulsive in some manner—that is, scaled, feathered, leathery, oozing something, or the like. The other half believes this defense comes from something extraordinary in the character's fiendish blood and has nothing to do with its appearance.

Both alternatives outlined above seem valid, so pick one and stick with it. Since the article does not imply any change in

Basic Training

I'm a new DM, and I was just wondering how you calculate saving throws for monsters? Nowhere in the *Dungeon Master*® *Guide* can I find this information.

In most cases, use the warrior group table and treat the monster's Hit Dice as its level. Creatures that have extra hit points in addition to their Hit Dice get a one-level boost to their saving throws for every four added points or fraction thereof. The introduction to the *Monstrous Manual* book and Chapter 9 of the *Dungeon Master Guide* (under the Rolling Saving Throws section) have more information.

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appearance (beyond the usual for tieflings), the second option is slightly more desirable.

Do undead have a Strength rating for the purpose of lifting and carrying? If so, do all types of undead have the same Strength?

It depends on the undead. Incorporeal creatures have no Strength scores to speak of. For corporeal undead creatures (or any corporeal creature), assume 3½ points per size category (Strength 3 at tiny, 7 at small, 10 at medium, and so on) plus the creature's Hit Dice. For example, a ghoul is a 2 HD creature of medium size, so a typical ghoul has a Strength score of 12. If you want a more detailed method for assigning ability scores to monsters, check out Chapter 2 of the *High-Level Campaigns* book.

The description of the devil Geryon in *A Paladin in Hell* refers to the "beguile" spell. No one in my gaming group can find a description of this spell. If this spell works like a *rod of beguiling*, are our party members allowed a saving throw?

There is no such spell. Geryon's spell-like power works like a *rod of beguiling*. There is no saving throw, but magic resistance and elven resistance to *charm* effects are applicable. Any number of magical effects can negate or block beguiling, including the *mind blank* spell. Note that beguiled creatures cannot be compelled to do anything harmful to themselves or that would contradict their alignments.

How many spells can a beholder cast in a single round? The *Monstrous Manual* book says they can cast spells at will, but lists their number of attacks as 1, which is confusing.

A standard beholder is not a spell-caster and can't cast any spells. It can, however, use each of its eyes every round, provided the eye actually bears on a target.

The "number of attacks" entry at the beginning of a monster description refers only to melee or missile attacks; you have to read the description, especially the Combat section, to find out what else the creature can do. In the case of a beholder, the single attack is the creature's bite. The eye rays are special additional attacks. Note that in most cases a creature can attack physically or use a special ability, not both. The beholder's ability to bite and use several eyes at the same time is an exception.

Can the tarrasque be destroyed by acid or killed via petrification?

The *Monstrous Manual* book and the *Complete Book of Humanoids* give the pixie character the ability to create illusions that are permanent until dispelled, once a day. How powerful is this ability? Can the pixie create an illusory creature and control its actions? Or is the pixie limited to inanimate objects?

Treat the pixie illusion ability as a *permanent illusion* spell cast at 12th level, except that it has only visual and audible components.

Can the tarrasque be destroyed by acid or killed via petrification?

No, in both cases. The tarrasque can be turned to stone, but this will not kill it even if it fails its System Shock roll. DMs might decide that the tarrasque will eventually become unpetrified. It might simply become dormant when petrified, only to become fleshy and active again after 4d4 years, or it might simply revert to flesh after a day, a week, or a month.

The tarrasque is susceptible to acid damage, but a simple acid attack will not truly kill it no matter how much acid is used—the tarrasque can be killed only with a *wish* applied after it has been reduced to –30 hit points. Acid might be a good way to reduce the tarrasque's hit points to –30, but it can't do the job alone.

I know that lycanthropes are harmed by silver (and sometimes cold-wrought iron) weapons, but do they also suffer damage from natural things such as drowning, falling, or being crushed by an avalanche?

Yes to all. Lycanthropes (and other creatures that have any form of weapon immunity) also are susceptible to energy attacks such as fire, lightning, and acid—even from nonmagical sources—unless their descriptions specifically say they are immune.

I'm trying to figure out the rules for food. I've found the cost of food, but I would like know what happens when characters don't or can't eat or drink. How long until they die? What effects do hunger and dehydration have on characters?

You can assume that a character of human size needs a half a gallon of water a day. If the character gets less than that, but at least half, he loses 1d4 points of Constitution every 2 days. If he gets no water or less than half, he loses 1d6 points of Constitution a day. Double the water requirement and the rate of Constitution loss for very hot conditions (such as deserts).

A human-sized character needs four pounds of food a day. If the character gets less than that, but at least half, he loses 1d4 points of Constitution every 4 days. If he gets no food or less than half, he loses 1d6 points of Constitution every four days. Double the food requirement and rate of loss for very cold conditions or very strenuous activity.

Once the character receives proper food and water (the full requirement of each), he regains one lost point of Constitution per day of rest.

Many fiends can *teleport without error*. When I read the spell description, I find an ambiguity. The text indicates that a caster within her home plane can *teleport without error* but must use the Teleport Error Table for attempts to *teleport* to other planes. Fair enough, but what if the fiend is on another plane (not her home plane) and *teleports* within that plane? For example, what if a baatezu (home plane Baator) is on the Gray Waste and *teleports* to a location elsewhere on the Gray Waste?

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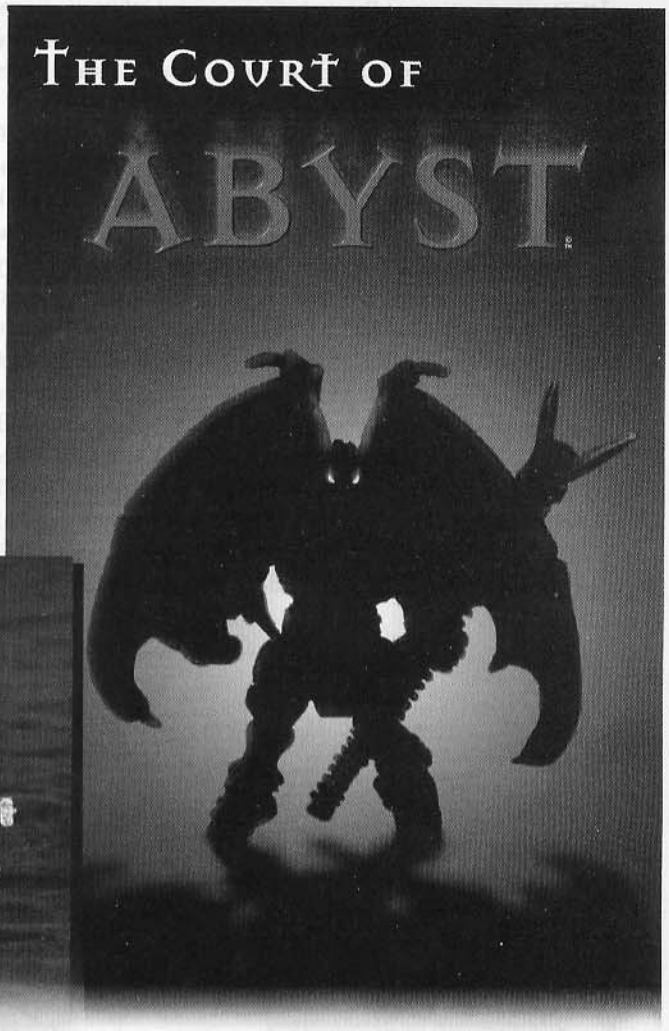

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Ignore the reference to the caster's home plane. If the caster does not leave the plane she's on, there is no chance for error when using *teleport without error*. If the caster uses the spell to travel to another plane, there is a chance for error.

What does an elf's resistance to *sleep* and *charm* effects really work against? Does it work against breath weapons?

As "Sage Advice" has said before, an elf's or half-elf's resistance applies to effects that make the recipient sleep or charm the recipient. In this case, a "charm" is an effect that establishes some sort of continuing control over the recipient, not just a compulsion; *charm person* is a charm effect, *hold person* and *suggestion* are not.

Unlike magic resistance, an elf's or half-elf's resistance can apply to breath weapons and other non spell-like effects.

According to the *Player's Handbook*, a thief's Read Languages ability is based on eclectic knowledge the thief has picked up. She knows enough about signs and symbols to puzzle out writing. One of my gaming groups has adopted the rule that to use this ability, the character must be able to read and write her own language. What do you think?

I've encountered a lot worse house rules in my day. There's no particular reason why an illiterate thief character couldn't use her Read Languages skill to decipher something written in her native tongue. Indeed, literacy is not a requirement to use the Read Languages skill. On the other hand, reading is a fairly complex task, and it is reasonable to assume that you must master the basics of reading at least one language before you can try to decipher others. Of course, if your thief is required to be literate to use the Read Languages skill, the campaign's wizards should have to be literate to read their spellbooks, and perhaps clerics should have to be literate as well.

Skip Williams likens the task of reading game rules to using the Read Languages skill—the more knowledge you collect, the better your understanding of the whole.

MIND FLAYERS

by Mike Selinker

no. 12

These fifteen *Player's Handbook* spells were used to battle a grouping of monsters. One rule was used to alter the spells. Once you figure out the rule and restore the spells, you'll reveal the monsters that these spells overcame.

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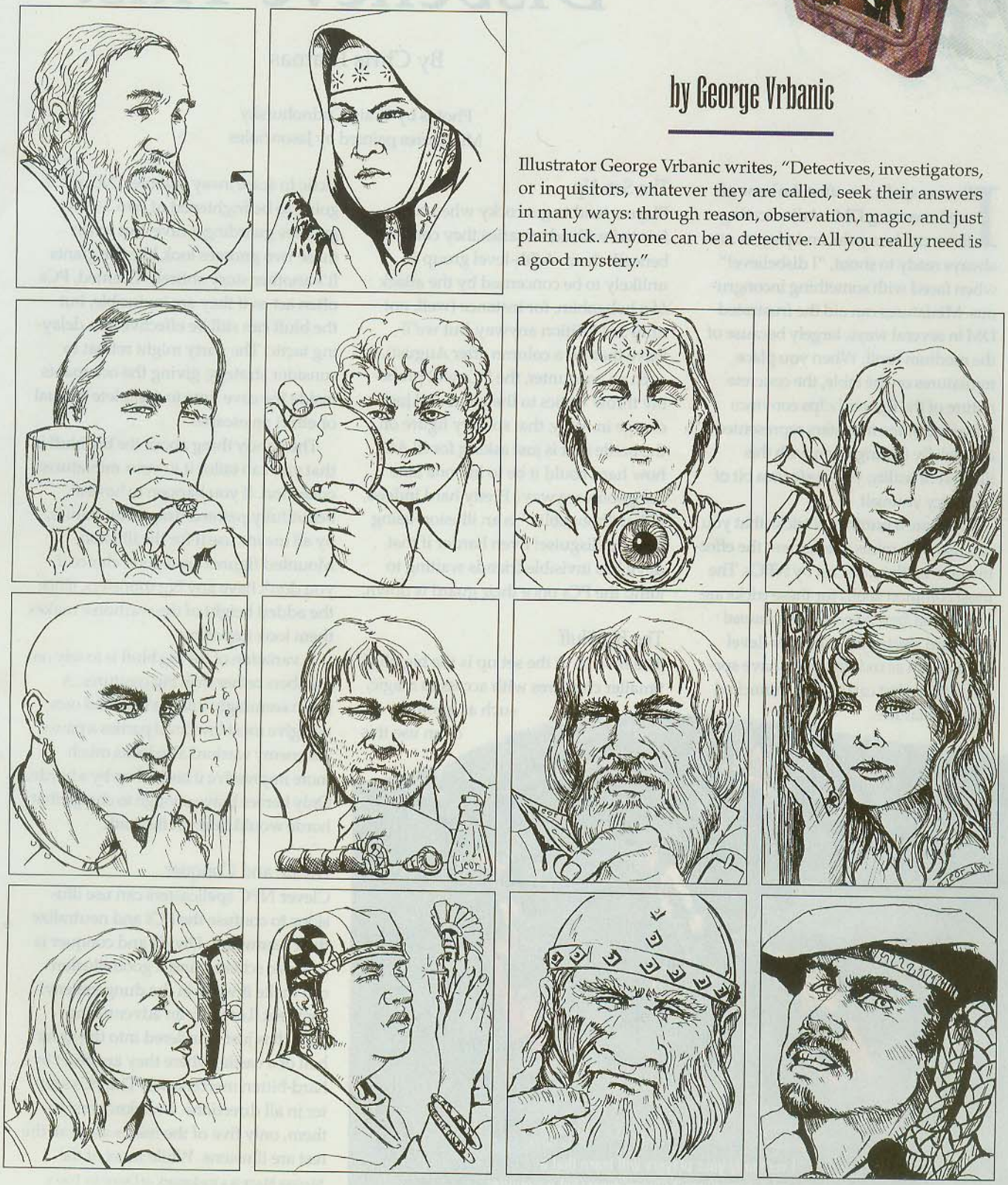
15						S		E	A					

PC Portraits

INVESTIGATORS

by George Vrbanic

Illustrator George Vrbanic writes, "Detectives, investigators, or inquisitors, whatever they are called, seek their answers in many ways: through reason, observation, magic, and just plain luck. Anyone can be a detective. All you really need is a good mystery."



Role Models

Disbelieve This!

By Chris Pramas

Photos by Craig Cudnohufsky
Miniatures painted by Jason Soles

Illusion spells are often the bane of well-meaning DMs. Adjudicating them can be a pain, and players are always ready to shout, "I disbelieve!" when faced with something incongruous. Miniatures can aid the frustrated DM in several ways, largely because of the medium itself. When you place miniatures on the table, the concrete nature of the figures helps convince players that the monsters represented are real. By fooling them with this illusion of reality, you perform a bit of wizardry yourself.

There are a number of tricks that you can use with minis to augment the effectiveness of illusions cast by NPCs. The most common spells for these tricks are *phantasmal force*, *improved phantasmal force*, and *spectral force*. Higher–level spells, such as *vacancy*, often have specific effects that can also be mimicked with miniatures.

The Set–Up

Players tend to get cocky when confronted with adversaries they consider beneath them. A 5th-level group is unlikely to be concerned by the attack of a hobgoblin, for instance (well, not until 3rd Edition anyway, but we'll leave that for a column after August). In such an encounter, the PCs will probably throw tactics to the wind and just charge in. Why, that solitary figure on the battle mat is just asking for it! And how hard could it be to kill one lone hobgoblin anyway? Pretty hard indeed, if that "hobgoblin" is an illusion-using devil in disguise! Even harder if that devil has invisible friends waiting to jump the PCs once their guard is down.

The Big Bluff

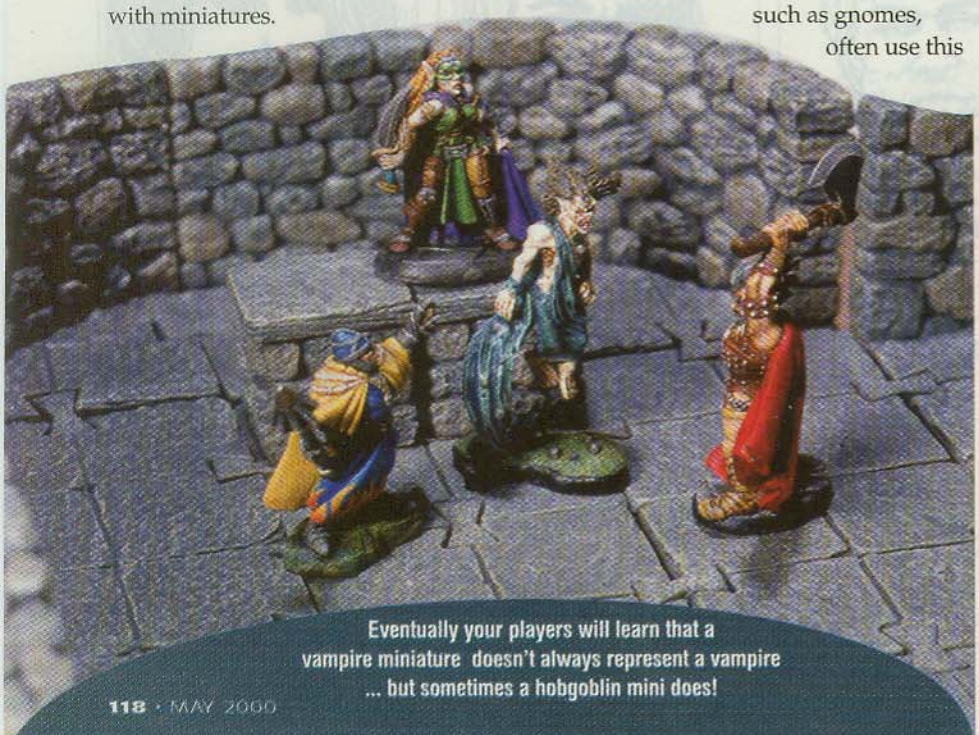
The reverse of the set up is the big bluff. Smaller creatures with access to magic, such as gnomes, often use this tactic to scare away enemies. No one is going to be frightened of two 3-foot gnomes guarding a cave, but when those two gnomes look like fire giants it's another story entirely. Granted, PCs often act as if they are invincible, but the bluff can still be effective as a delaying tactic. The party might retreat to consider strategy, giving the occupants inside the cave time to complete a ritual or effect an escape.

The handy thing about the big bluff is that you can tailor it to your miniatures collection. If you happen to have a beautifully painted dragon miniature, by all means use it for the illusion. Mounted figures are a good choice if you don't have any big monsters, since the added height of the warhorse makes them look imposing.

A variation of the big bluff is to rely on numbers rather than big creatures. A room seemingly full of a hundred orcs will give most low-level parties a pause. An enemy warlord also looks much more impressive if backed up by a horde. Only heroes brave enough to charge that horde would find out the truth.

Divide and Conquer

Clever NPC spellcasters can use illusions to confuse the PCs and neutralize their teamwork. Divide and conquer is a classic scheme, and a good illusion can make it work in the dungeon environment. Let's say an adventuring party has just wandered into the great hall of a castle, where they are beset by hard-bitten mercenaries. The PCs scatter in all directions. Unbeknownst to them, only five of the mercs are real; the rest are illusions. While most of the



Eventually your players will learn that a vampire miniature doesn't always represent a vampire ... but sometimes a hobgoblin mini does!

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Jason Soles, Painter Extraordinaire

If you've seen pictures of any of the new Wizards of the Coast miniatures, you've seen the work of Jason Soles. Jason is the only full–time painter employed by the Miniatures Division, and all of the Wizards figures pass through his hands. He works in the part of Wizards known as Siberia, which is also where you'll find artists like Sam Wood and Mark Tedin, and sculptors like Mike McVey. Siberia might sound cold, but it's a hotbed of creativity.

Jason's work is indispensable. When the test castings of new miniatures come back from the mold maker, Jason immediately goes to work painting them. His painted models are then used for packaging, promotions, and the website. Without his work, Role Models would look very plain indeed.

party is busy chasing shadows, the real mercs gang up on one PC at a time.

In addition to other clues, you can give some hints to go with your figure choice. Using your painted figs for the mercs, or plastic ones for the illusions, would give a subtle hint to the discerning player.

The Lure

Wary PCs might be tempted to act rashly by certain lures, such as threatened innocents or an impending cave-in. The *advanced illusion* spell is ideal for this sort of thing, since the caster can "program" the spell. An illusion of a hysterical prisoner, pleading to be set free, will bring PCs running. This lure can lead them into a trap or get them into a confined space for a nice *fireball*. It also makes a good distraction, allowing backstabbing thieves to get the drop on the PCs or an evil wizard to make good his escape.

Giving Out Clues

It wouldn't be fair to give DMs so many tips about fooling players without noting a few ways to give clues as well. After they have fallen for a few tricks, your players might learn a thing or two.

Lower–level wizards will primarily use the *phantasmal force* spell. The real give-away of this spell is that there is no sound to go with the illusion. Since you need to describe sounds to your players even when using miniatures, this is a great way to give them a clue that all is not as it seems.

You can give more subtle clues if your have accessories to go with you minis. For instance, if the PCs are in a room when a seemingly destructive spell like *fireball* is cast at them, you can make a point of knocking the PC minis around while leaving the tables and chests where they were. Clever players might realize the *fireball* was just an illusion.

You should also remember that a melee attack generally shows the illusion for what it is, unless the caster is on hand to make the illusion act appropriately. If you want to interpret this rule more strictly, you can require that the caster have line of sight to the illusion. If something is blocking his view, like a *wall of fog*, he won't be able to keep up appearances.

Even without tricks and traps, miniatures can still spice up the use of many illusion spells. Describing a *mirror image* spell is one thing, but actually plunking down six identical minis is something else. Just remember that your players' first reaction will be dictated by what you slap on the table. With a little preparation, you can make those illusions come to life.

Chris Pramas, author of the Guide to Hell *and the* Dragon Fist RPG, *left the green pastures of R&D to help found the new Wizards of the Coast Miniatures Division this past August. He hotly denies that the move was motivated by a desire to play with more toys at work.*

Marines Ho!

This June, Wizards of the Coast is releasing an exciting range of StarCraft miniatures to complement the Alternity® StarCraft Roleplaying Game. The Protoss, Zerg, and Terrans each get their own boxed set featuring an array of troops familiar to fans of the computer game.

Pictured here are "greens" of two of the Terran minis, the medic and the marine. This is what miniatures look like when the sculptor is done with them. You'll notice the figures are mounted on corks, which give the sculptor something to hold onto while working. You can also see the marine's gun is actually a piece of piping, not part of the epoxy. Sculptors often use tricks like this to save time and add realism.

The finished greens are sent off to be molded, which destroys the original figure. In other words, the mold maker has to get it right the first time!

School of Hard Nox

By Johnny L. Wilson

All I Ever Needed To Know About Traps I Learned from Nox

By a route obscure and lonely,
Haunted by ill angels only,
Where an Eidolon, named Night,
On a black throne reigns upright...
—Edgar Allan Poe, "Dreamland"

There are eidolons in *Nox*, along with necromancers, ogres, wolves, and other creatures of the night. Demersed in the dark and dangerous dungeons of *Nox*, you play a warrior, conjurer, or wizard in a fast-paced, reflex-challenging dungeon delve. Named after the Latin word for "night," *Nox* serenades you with the demented decibels of a soundtrack as unsettling as the subliminal squeals of slaughtered swine (used in *The Exorcist*). It can seem very much like you are as "Out of Space—Out of Time" as Poe claimed to be in his poem about wandering a dark landscape in his dream.

The best news about this dark Dreamland is that each character class features different scenarios and challenges in the solo game and different advantages in the multiplayer game. The solo game is divided into eleven chapters for each character, and each chapter is different in story, emphasis, and challenge for each of the three character classes. The warrior class depends on agility and combat. The conjurer depends on clever use of summoned creatures, as well as magical spells. The wizard uses a mixture of spells and magical traps to win his battles.

MAGIC PYTHON
In what looks like a Terry Gilliam cartoon from *Monty Python's Flying Circus*, the familiar pressure plate trap unleashes a massive hand to smash careless characters.

By the time you read this column, you'll know that *Nox* is a major commercial and critical success. The game has beautiful art, impressive technology, near-limitless action, and a marvelous style in its use of traps. There is nothing unfair, nothing diabolical in the use of traps in *Nox*. Traps are handled with a cleverness that offers many a lesson to tabletop Dungeon Masters.

By the dismal tarns and pools Where dwell the Ghouls

Poe would have been pleased with the implementation of the most common type of trap in *Nox*. Everyone from novices and munchkins to the most experienced DM knows about pressure plate traps. You step on a piece of discolored flooring or a stone ligature that disguises a pressure plate. Immediately, tons of rocks or cauldrons of boiling oil fall down upon you. The pressure plate trap in *Nox* is a cross between the standard trap and a piece of Terry Gilliam animation. A huge stone hand plummets from the ceiling, flattens the trespasser, and yo-yos back into position.

PUSHY HERO
This trap features two side passages at regular intervals. When the wizard has the Push spell, it's possible to disarm this trap by magically pressing the big red button. Otherwise, it burnnnnnnsz!

This is the easiest kind of trap to implement in a dungeon. You merely decide how hidden you want the pressure plate to be and how difficult it will be to detect. In *Nox*, the pressure plates are so obviously discolored from the rest of the dungeon floor that you don't need to detect the traps. This is largely because there is no skill for detecting traps in *Nox*. In an AD&D game, your traps should be more subtle.

Decide how much crushing damage (or, in the case of hot oil or lava) burning damage the trap will do if the PCs fail their saving throws. Start with 2d6 for entry-level dungeons, and crank it up by 1d6 per level of the PCs. Then, decide if the trap is on a pulley system that allows it to reset (as in *Nox*) or if it is a one-shot wonder where the remains of the trap mark the spot.

Fortunately, *Nox* does add something to the pressure plate trap that's very interesting. In spots, the designers put several of them close together and added some wandering zombies. The zombies who wander across the area serve two main purposes. First, placing zombies next to the pressure plates might cause your hero to run across one

of them in the frenzy of the fray. It's always a good idea for DMs to place monsters near trip switches, pressure plates, and hidden buttons. Second, the zombies (controlled by the program) occasionally stumble across a plate and get smashed. Since, however, they regenerate, your hero might pass them by and erroneously perceive that the threat is over. Then, they can rise to threaten the hero from behind. DMs should occasionally lull parties into a false sense of security by placing regenerating creatures near traps.

Never its mysteries are exposed To the weak human eye unclosed

In most dungeons, the most diabolical (and potentially dangerous) traps are those that are obscured and enhanced by magic. *Nox* has an interesting way of allowing wizards (only) to create traps. Once your hero reaches a high enough level to construct traps (my wizard made it in Chapter 4), you can chain up to three spells together. Then, you can lay the trap anywhere you please. If you don't like the position, pick it up and it will go into your inventory. When you find the right spot, open the inventory and drag the trap onto the site where you want it.

Unlike the magical traps in *Nox*, DMs should usually associate any magical traps with arcane symbols or objects. Wary PCs usually cast *detect magic* on items or symbols, but they usually suspect magical traps only on symbols, not items. Clever DMs will mix them up to keep the party from opening chests, barrels, and coffers like birthday presents.

Even more interesting than having all of your party die from your traps is having the party solve the trap and use it to their advantage. In *Nox*, there is one place where pressing a button causes fire to rise through the vents in the floor all around an island of sanctuary on which the hero stands. My wizard barbecued a zombie with that trap. Another trap throws Greek fire down two side passages. If one has learned the Push spell, it is possible to disarm the trap from a distance and travel down either side passage.

In *Nox*, the traps' control mechanism is obvious. In both cases, it is a big red button. In your campaign, the control mechanism could be a well-worn gargoyle that must be pulled or turned, a gong that must be struck, a discolored stone that must be turned, or any number of levers. A rule of thumb is to make the control mechanisms similar, but different enough that the PCs are never quite sure whether they are examining a control mechanism.

For the spirit that walks in shadow O! it is an Eldorado!

Nox challenges us to design our dungeons with variety, danger and the occasional deadly combo of monster and machine. For more examples of traps from *Nox*, check out our website at: www.wizards.com/dragon.

NEW SPELL

Triptych Glyph
(Abjuration)
Level: Wizard 9
Range: Touch
Components: V, S
Duration: Permanent until triggered
Casting Time: 1 round
Area of Effect: Object touched
Saving Throw: None (see below)

This spell allows the caster to inscribe a magical and invisible *glyph* onto an inanimate surface such as a door, 5-foot-square section of floor, chest lid, or golem. The *glyph* can be seen only by the caster and anyone casting a *detect magic* or *detect invisibility* spell. The caster can determine the shape of the *glyph*.

The *triptych glyph* acts as a spell receptacle. Once it is in place, the caster can spend the next 3 rounds casting 1st-, 2nd-, or 3rd-level spells upon the *glyph*. If no spells are cast upon the *glyph* within the next 3 rounds, it fades, and the spell is lost. The *glyph* cannot hold spells of 4th level or higher, and no more than three spells can be contained. A caster can have no more than one *triptych glyph* per level prepared at any time.

When any living creature other than the caster touches the object or area so enspelled, the *glyph* releases the spells contained within it, activating them simultaneously. All spells are targeted at the creature touching the *glyph*, although spells with areas of effect could affect other creatures within range.

For example, a wizard casts *triptych glyph* upon a sarcophagus. The wizard spends the next 3 rounds casting *magic missile*, *irritation*, and *suggestion* upon the *glyph*. When a thief touches the sarcophagus, he is struck by all three spells simultaneously. Although the *glyph* itself allows no saving throw, the spells cast upon it are treated normally; thus, the thief would make no saving throw against the *magic missile* but would against the *irritation* and *suggestion* spells.

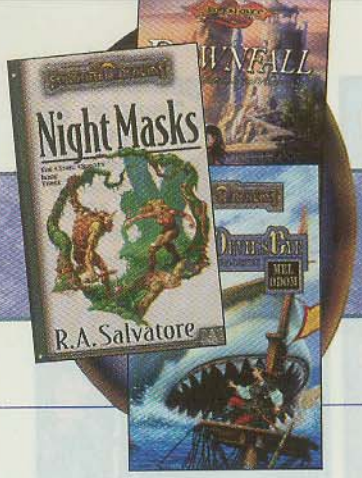
A *triptych glyph* can be removed by casting a successful *dispel magic*. An *antimagic shell* destroys the *glyph* on contact. Disintegrating or otherwise obliterating the object or item upon which the *glyph* is cast also disarms the spell.

TIME BOMB

Click to "Construct a Trap." Drag up to three spells into the trap set. Click to "Lay a Trap" and immediately be charged the Mana cost for the total of all three spells. Then, you either leave the trap in situ or pick up the trap to carry to another spot. There, drag it from your inventory to the desired location.

Nodwick in:
A-one, A-two...
THAT'S THE SOUND OF THE MEN BUSTIN' UP THE CHAIN GAAAAAANG!
WHAT AN UNHOLY SHRINE!
NO KIDDING! THEIR CHURCH BULLETIN READS LIKE A SERIAL KILLER'S "TO DO" LIST!
UH-OH. THE CONGREGATION IS GETTING RESTLESS!
OUR HEROES HAVE EMBARKED ON A QUEST TO STOP THE TRAFFICKING IN SLAVES THAT HAS PLAGUED THE WILD COAST. THE TRAIL LEADS TO A RUINED TEMPLE...
WOW! CHURCH-GOING ORCS SURE ARE FERVENT! I WISH THEY'D QUIT SINGING "ONWARD GRUUMISH SOLDIERS."
HOW'S PIFFANY DOING AGAINST THEIR CLERIC?
OOPSIE! I THINK I OVERDID IT...
16 TONS of PROTECTION FROM EVIL
BELOW THE TEMPLE, GIANT INSECTS ROAM.
THOSE BIG BUGS TOOK NODWICK! HE'S PROBABLY BEEN COCOONED BY NOW!
GAME OVER, MAN! GAME OVER!
STAY FROSTY, GUYS! I THINK WE'VE FOUND THE QUEEN!
THAT THING IS AS BIG AS A FOUR-WAY JOUSTING ACCIDENT!
NO SWEAT...
"POWER WORD: SQUISH?"
AH.
"OTTO'S CRUSHING SOLE."
HOW ICKY! PEOPLE CAGED LIKE ANIMALS!
HOW COME YOU NEVER SAY THAT WHEN THE TOWN GUARD DRAGS ME OUT OF A TAVERN?
LOOK OUT! MORE BUGS!
<WE WILL KNOCK THESE FOOLS INTO THE CELLS BELOW!>*
<NOT SO FAST, EDGAR! THEY'VE GOT EVERY INSECT'S GREATEST NEMESIS!>
* TRANSLATED FROM LA CUCARACHAN.
AW, C'MON! WON'T YOU GUYS PLAY "SOLAR COLLECTOR" WITH ME?
<AIEEE! RUN!>
<I'M TOO YOUNG TO FRY!>
THE SLAVE LORD IS CONFRONTED...
HELLO, THERE! I PURCHASED SOME SLAVES THAT WERE THE WRONG SIZE. CAN YOU DIRECT ME TO CUSTOMER SERVICE?
THIS IS ALL THE SERVICE YOU'LL GET!
NOW THAT YOU'RE CALM, THE LOVELY PIFFANY WILL TELL YOU WHAT YOU'VE WON!
THANK YOU, ARTAX! FOR BEING A NOT-NICE PERSON, WE'RE SELLING YOU TO A FAMILY OF HILL GIANTS TO BE A WET NURSE FOR THEIR OCTUPLETS!
A WET NURSE?
GRANTED, HE'LL NEED ON-THE-JOB TRAINING...
HEY! I FOUND A MAP TO ANOTHER SLAVER OUTPOST!

LATER, AT THE SLAVER STOCKADE...
OKAY, EVERYONE, LISTEN UP! WE HAVE AN ESCAPED SLAVE TO BRING IN!
I WANT A HARD TARGET SEARCH OF EVERY BOAT HOUSE, GATE HOUSE, GUARD HOUSE AND HOUSE OF ILL REPUTE. THE SLAVE IS...UH, SHORT... WITH A RED SHIRT...AND A HUGE NOSE. DISMISSED!
YOU'RE A QUICK THINKER.
SOMEONE HAS TO BE.
"HOUSE OF ILL REPUTE?"
HEY, THEY'RE GONE, AREN'T THEY?
OUR HEROES FACE ICAR, THE BLIND SLAVE LORD...
I'LL CRUSH YOU ALL! MY HEIGHTENED SENSES LET ME "SEE" BETTER THAN YOU!
YOU'RE BLUFFING!
I CAN TELL THAT THERE ARE BITS OF CHIMICHANGA IN YOUR BEARD FROM LUNCH, AND YOUR OAFISH WARRIOR HASN'T BATHED IN TWO DAYS!
ANYONE WITH A NOSE COULD'VE DISCOVERED THAT!
USING MY SONAR-LIKE HEARING, I'LL DICE THE LOT OF YOU!
HA! YOU DIDN'T COUNT ON MY AIR HORN OF OBNOXIOUSNESS, DID YOU?
LATER, IN THE HEART OF THE STOCKADE...
BLACKTHORN? SOME MERCHANTS ARE HERE TO BUY SLAVES.
SEND THEM IN.
HELLO. I NEED ALL THE SLAVES YOU CAN SELL ME. I'M OPENING A CHAIN OF CONVENIENCE STORES.
WHAT? YOU'RE GOING TO USE MY SLAVES FOR THAT?
REVOLTING! ALL I DO IS PERFORM MEDICAL EXPERIMENTS ON THEM!
PEOPLE LIKE YOU DISGUST ME! I QUIT!
I TOLD YOU: EVEN THEY HAVE STANDARDS!
PEOPLE BEING TREATED LIKE PROPERTY... WORKING THEM TO DEATH... IT ALL SOUNDS SO... FAMILIAR.
YOU'RE FREE NOW!
GO BACK TO YOUR FAMILIES. WE WILL PRESS ON AND STOP THOSE WHO IMPRISONED YOU!
THERE THEY GO!
FREE!
WHUMP
FREE!
WHUMP
FREE!
WHUMP
FREE!
WHUMP
FREE!
WHUMP
YEAGAR, I THOUGHT I TOLD YOU TO REMOVE THEIR LEG SHACKLES!
I THOUGHT IT'D BE BEST IF THEY STUCK TOGETHER!



Coming Attractions

May

Dungeon of Death

A FORGOTTEN REALMS® Adventure
By Jason Carl

A deadly dungeon crawl set in the heart of one of the most dangerous and mysterious locales in the FORGOTTEN REALMS® setting. For the first time, D&D players will have access to one of the most mysterious locales from the First Edition FORGOTTEN REALMS campaign setting. The *Dungeon of Death* features an elaborate array of tricks, traps, and monsters—sure to challenge any party.

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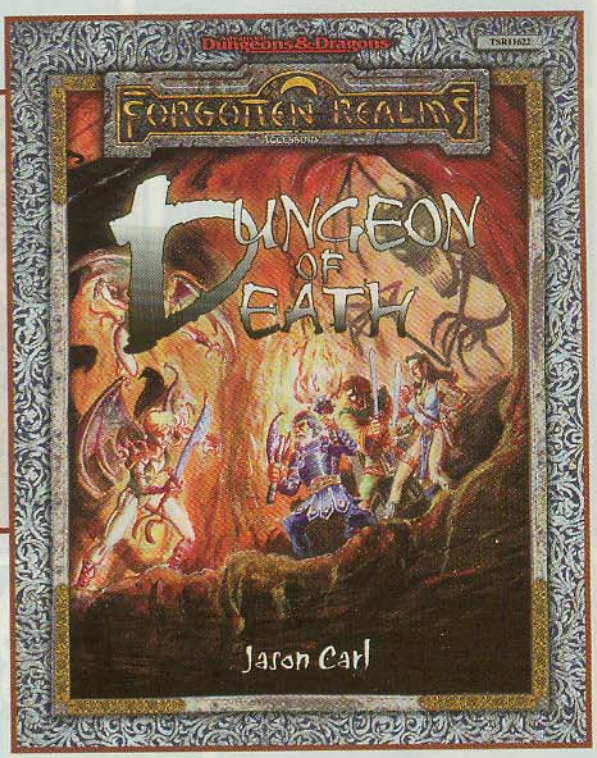
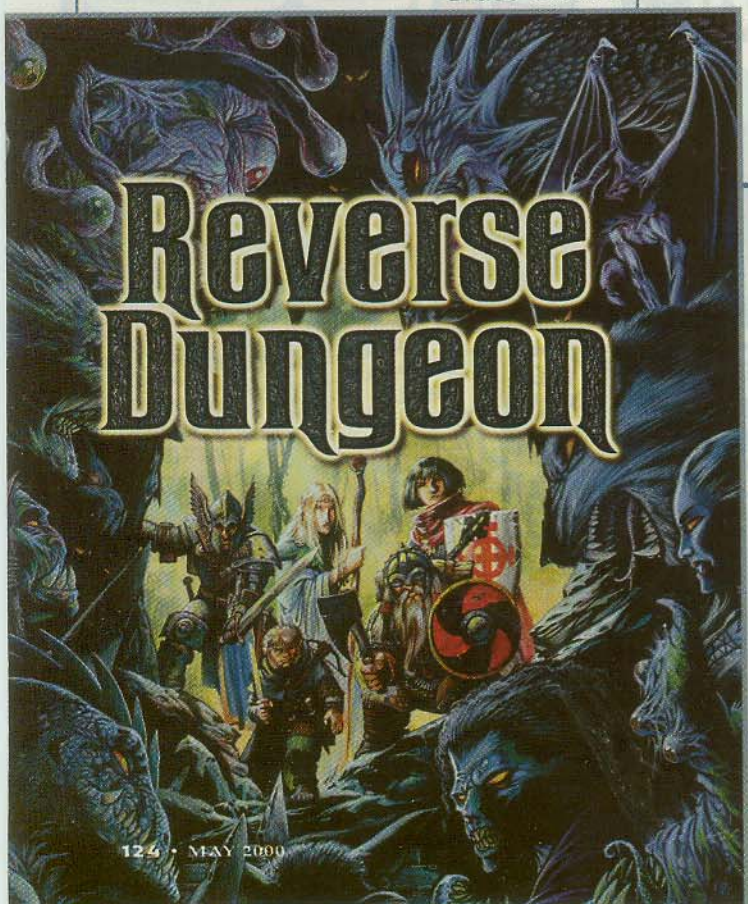
ISBN 0-7869-1622-2



From the Designers
"Being bad never felt so good."
•Bruce Cordell



Reverse Dungeon

An AD&D® Accessory
By John Rateliff and Bruce Cordell

Reverse Dungeon offers players a new way to experience the Dungeons & Dragons® game, reversing traditional roles in a way that will thrill D&D fans.

Crawling through dungeons and combating powerful monsters are at the heart of the D&D experience. Players and Dungeon Masters alike love monsters, and *Reverse Dungeon* allows them to actually play these monsters, intent on defending their lairs from pesky adventurers out to steal their treasure. This unique focus creates a whole new dimension in D&D gaming. And *Reverse Dungeon* contains a pregenerated adventure that Dungeon Masters can use immediately to give their players a brand-new D&D experience.

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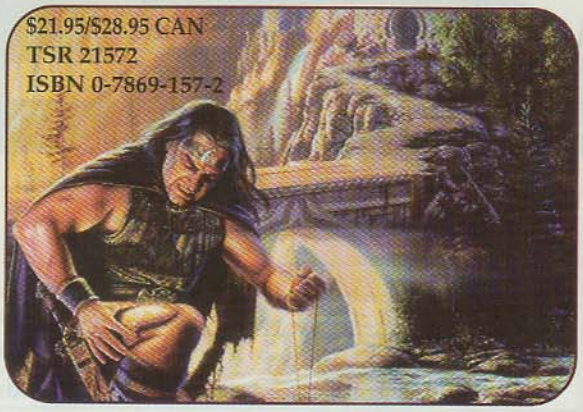
Downfall
The Dhamon Saga, Volume One
A DRAGONLANCE® Novel
By Jean Rabe



The long-awaited sequel to the bestselling Dragons of a New Age trilogy.

How far can a hero fall? Far enough to lose his soul? Dhamon Grimwulf, once a Hero of the Heart, has sunk into a bitter life of crime and squalor. Now, as the great dragon overlords of the Fifth Age coldly plot to strengthen their rule and to destroy their enemies, he must somehow find the will to redeem himself. But perhaps it is too late. *Downfall* marks the return of Dhamon and other characters from author Jean Rabe's bestselling Dragons of a New Age trilogy.

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A FORGOTTEN REALMS Novel
By Mel Odom

The exciting conclusion to the Threat from the Sea.

Iakhovas has been the cause of more destruction than any force since the Time of Troubles, and his true objective has been a mystery . . . until now. When a young sailor's journey is complete and an aging bard's final song is sung, an explosive climax sets all of Faerûn reeling.

Night Masks
A FORGOTTEN REALMS® Novel
By R. A. Salvatore

A new edition of an R. A. Salvatore classic.

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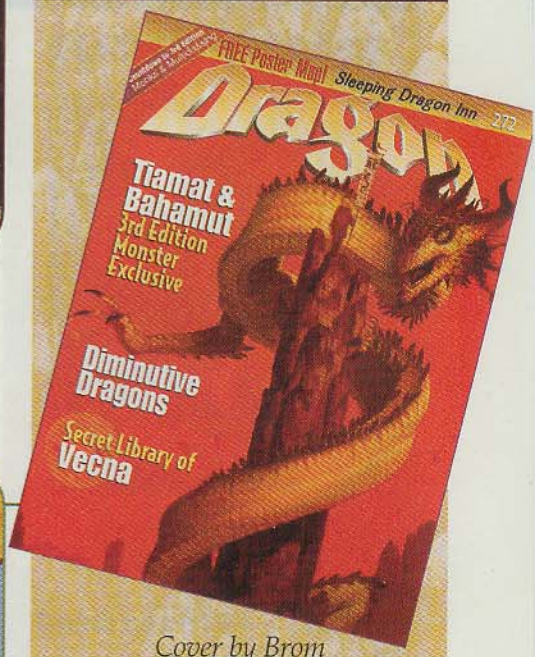
Coming Soon



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By Skip Williams

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By Robin D. Laws

Once you've confronted the dragon, sometimes negotiation is your only hope of survival.

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Upcoming Product Guide

June

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Spine of the World	FR Novel	$7.99
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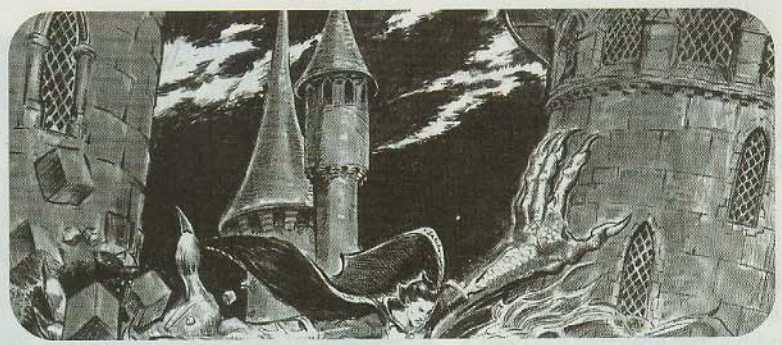
Descent into the Depths of the Earth	GH novel	$6.99
More Leaves from the Inn at the Last Home	DL Sourcebook	$19.95



July

Baldur's Gate II D&D Guidebook	FR Accessory	$18.95
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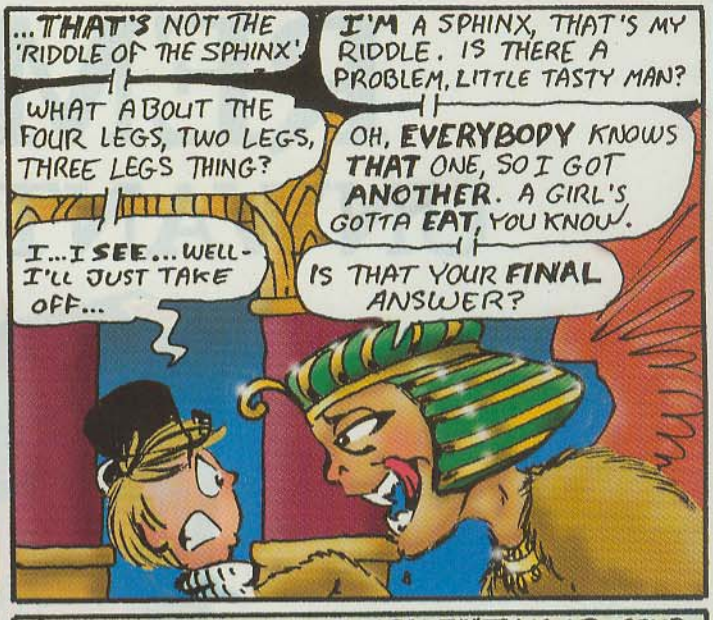
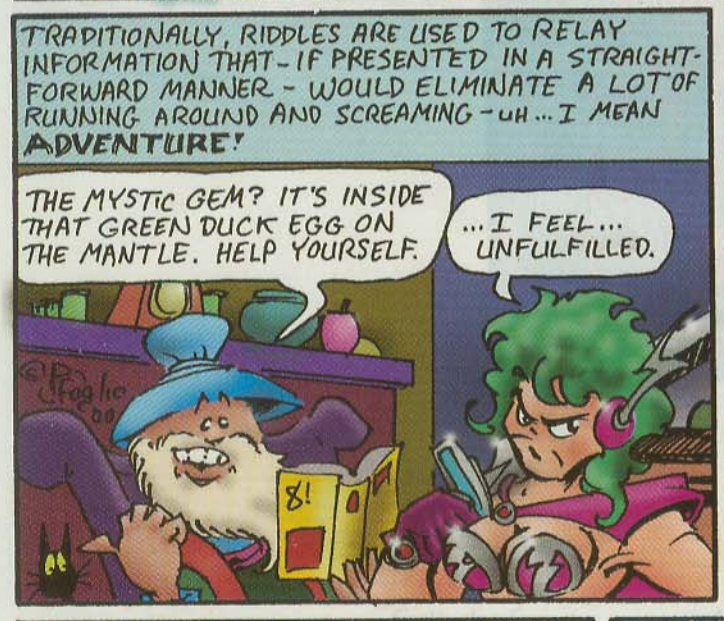
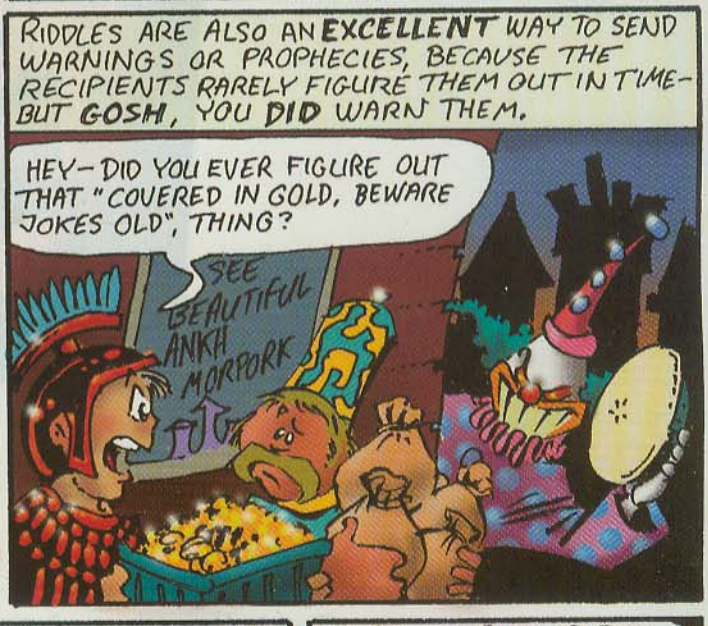
WHAT'S NEW WITH PHIL AND DIXIE

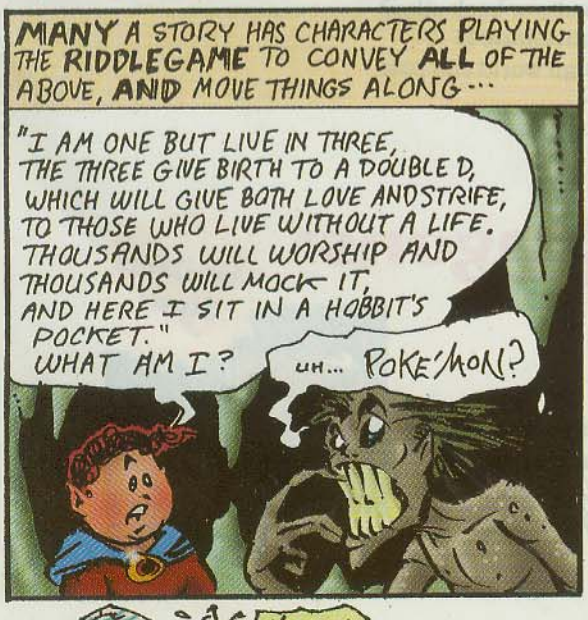
By Phil Foglio

RIDDLES HAVE BEEN AROUND FOR A LONG TIME. PERHAPS THE MOST FAMOUS BEING THE 'RIDDLE OF THE SPHINX.'
"HOW MUCH WOOD WOULD A WOODCHUCK CHUCK IF A WOODCHUCK COULD CHUCK WOOD?"


...THAT'S NOT THE 'RIDDLE OF THE SPHINX.'
I'M A SPHINX, THAT'S MY RIDDLE. IS THERE A PROBLEM, LITTLE TASTY MAN?
WHAT ABOUT THE FOUR LEGS, TWO LEGS, THREE LEGS THING?
OH, EVERYBODY KNOWS THAT ONE, SO I GOT ANOTHER. A GIRL'S GOTTA EAT, YOU KNOW.
I...I SEE... WELL- I'LL JUST TAKE OFF...
IS THAT YOUR FINAL ANSWER?


TRADITIONALLY, RIDDLES ARE USED TO RELAY INFORMATION THAT - IF PRESENTED IN A STRAIGHT-FORWARD MANNER - WOULD ELIMINATE A LOT OF RUNNING AROUND AND SCREAMING - UH... I MEAN ADVENTURE!
THE MYSTIC GEM? IT'S INSIDE THAT GREEN DUCK EGG ON THE MANTLE. HELP YOURSELF.
...I FEEL... UNFULFILLED.


RIDDLES ARE ALSO AN EXCELLENT WAY TO SEND WARNINGS OR PROPHECIES, BECAUSE THE RECIPIENTS RARELY FIGURE THEM OUT IN TIME- BUT GOSH, YOU DID WARN THEM.
HEY- DID YOU EVER FIGURE OUT THAT "COVERED IN GOLD, BEWARE JOKES OLD", THING?
SEE BEAUTIFUL ANKH MORPORK

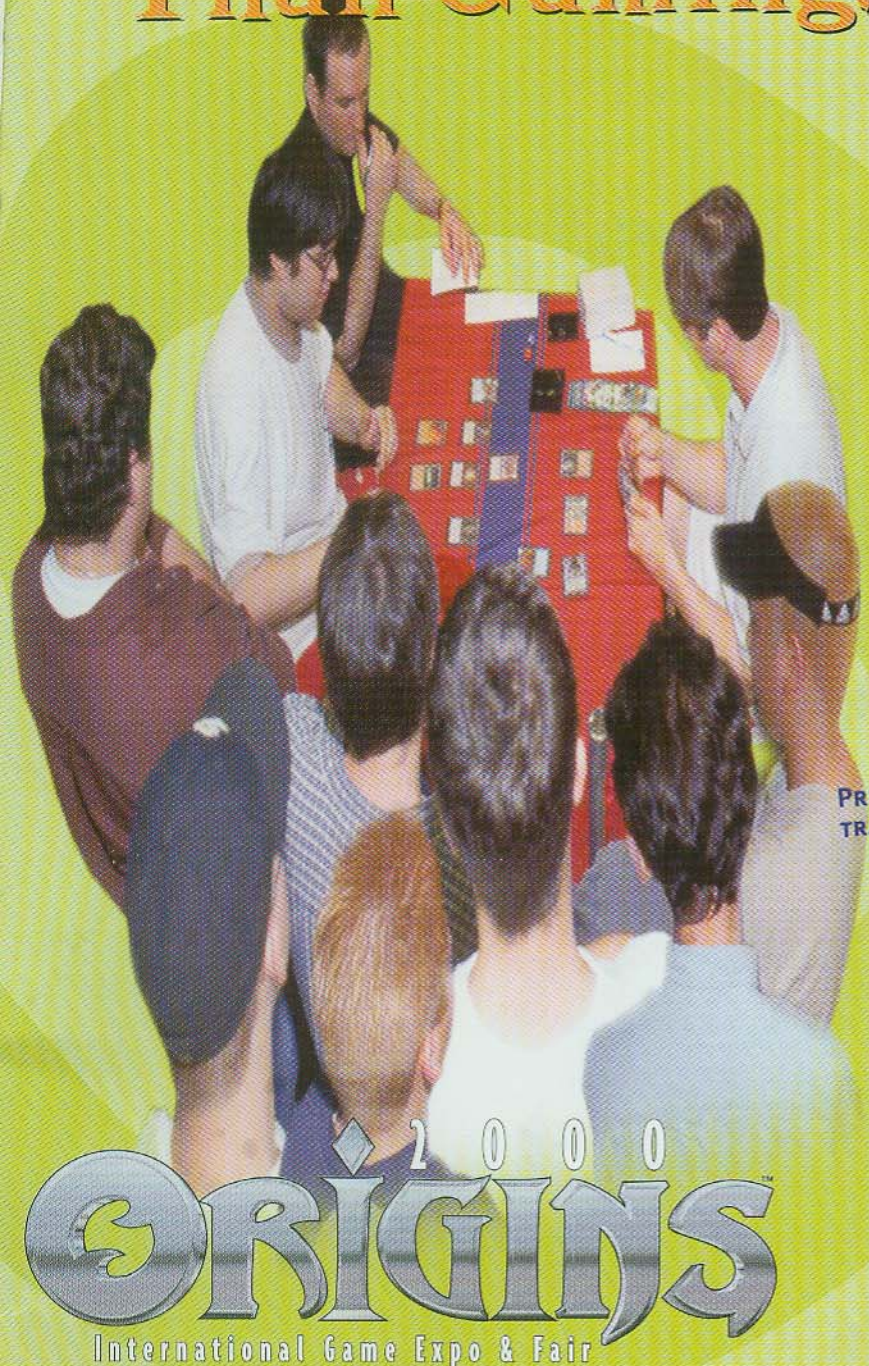

MANY A STORY HAS CHARACTERS PLAYING THE RIDDLEGAME TO CONVEY ALL OF THE ABOVE, AND MOVE THINGS ALONG...
"I AM ONE BUT LIVE IN THREE, THE THREE GIVE BIRTH TO A DOUBLE D, WHICH WILL GIVE BOTH LOVE AND STRIFE, TO THOSE WHO LIVE WITHOUT A LIFE. THOUSANDS WILL WORSHIP AND THOUSANDS WILL MOCK IT, AND HERE I SIT IN A HOBBIT'S POCKET."
WHAT AM I?
UH... POKE'HON?
HNNN!!

AND FINALLY, THERE ARE THOSE WHO DON'T DO WELL AT RIDDLES AND PUZZLES. FOR THEM THERE'S ALWAYS THE GORDIAN KNOT SOLUTION
'GORDIAN KNOT?' UM...

"THERE'S NO RIDDLER TOO SMART TO BE BEATEN TO DEATH WITH A BIG HAMMER!"
I CANNOT BELIEVE YOU GOT STUCK ON THE WOODCHUCK THING.
MY HERO!

END

There's More to Life Than Gaming, Right?



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Right?

Hello?

Sigh...

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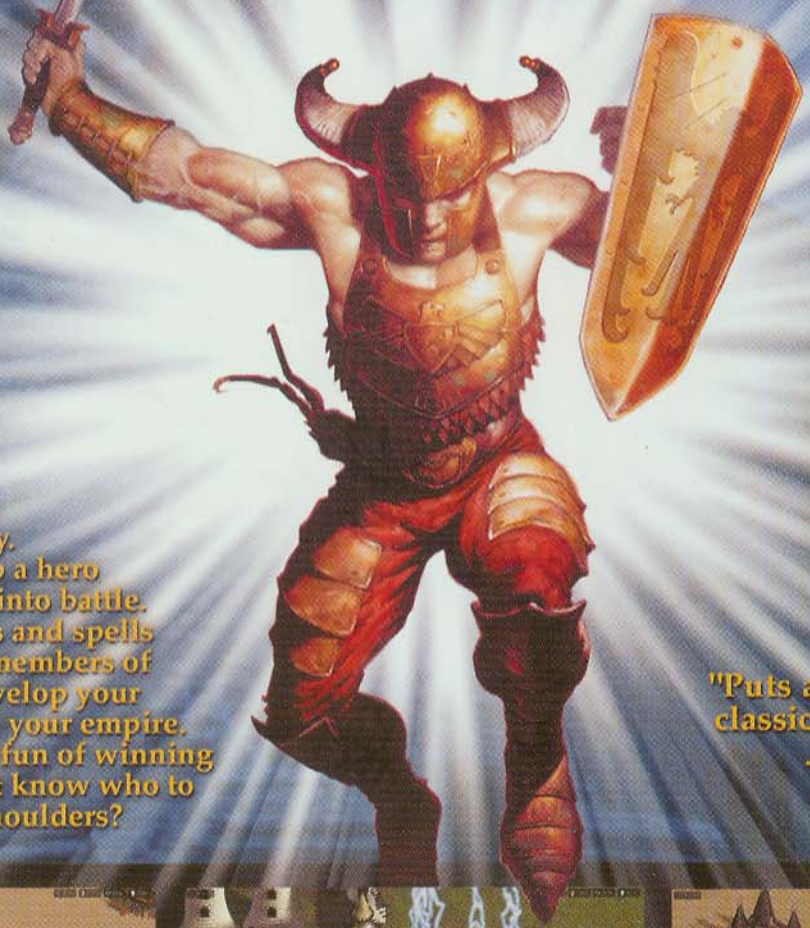
WARLORDS BATTLECRY

BECOME A HERO



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